

PLAYSTATION 4



PLAY



ISSUE NO 249
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ASSASSIN'S CREED

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FFVII

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- ▲ UNITY'S PARIS EXPLORED
- ▲ HUGE ROGUE HANDS-ON
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NOW IN FULL HD



WITH THE NATURALLY longer development times of true next-gen experiences, it's hardly surprising that so many publishers are filling the gaps made by these longer

cycles with upscaled versions of popular PS3 games. Some seem dead against the increasingly common practice, but those people tend to be missing the point – these optional upgrades are funding and tiding us over until all-new games, not replacing them. In any case, who in their right mind would turn down definitive versions of amazing games like *The Last Of Us* or *GTA V*? Not I, that's for sure.

Seeing this trend explode got us thinking about how we could best embrace this full HD future. So no, some scally hasn't made off with your covermount disc. It's just gone the way of all DVDs – to the great CEX in the sky. We'll still be bringing you the same great video content through both our YouTube channel and our own site too, with the added bonus of content now being properly HD so you can really get a feel for the awesome new games we cover.

It's not all HD re-releases, mind – *Destiny* is finally here (I'll stop banging on about it one day... maybe) and you can probably tell from our rammed review section that silly season is here again. And it won't let up this time, with the first half of 2015 packed with amazing games like *Bloodborne*, *Arkham Knight* and *Battlefield Hardline* and setting up for a killer year thanks to exciting distant projects like *MGSV: The Phantom Pain*, *No Man's Sky* and of course, *Uncharted 4*. It's all about to kick off, so if you've just joined the PS4 revolution, then welcome. You really couldn't have joined the winning side at a better time.

Enjoy the issue, and I'll see ya online.

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CURRENTLY PLAYING
Destiny (PS4)

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06

ASSASSIN'S CREED

Unity and Rogue: the two faces of Assassin's Creed

PLAY Contents

Set sail for adventure on the high seas of PlayStation



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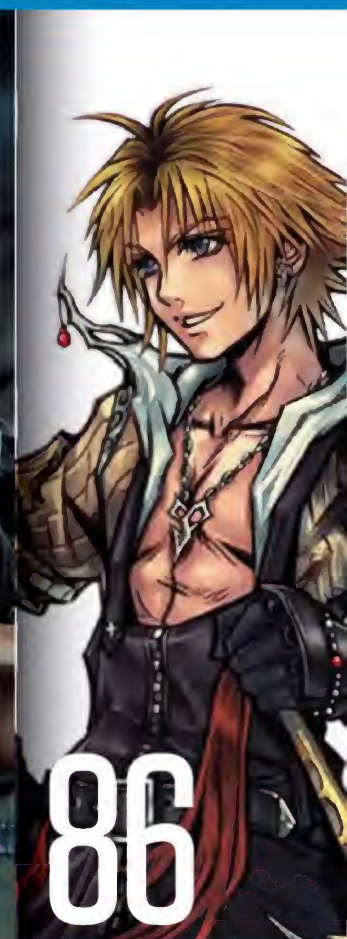
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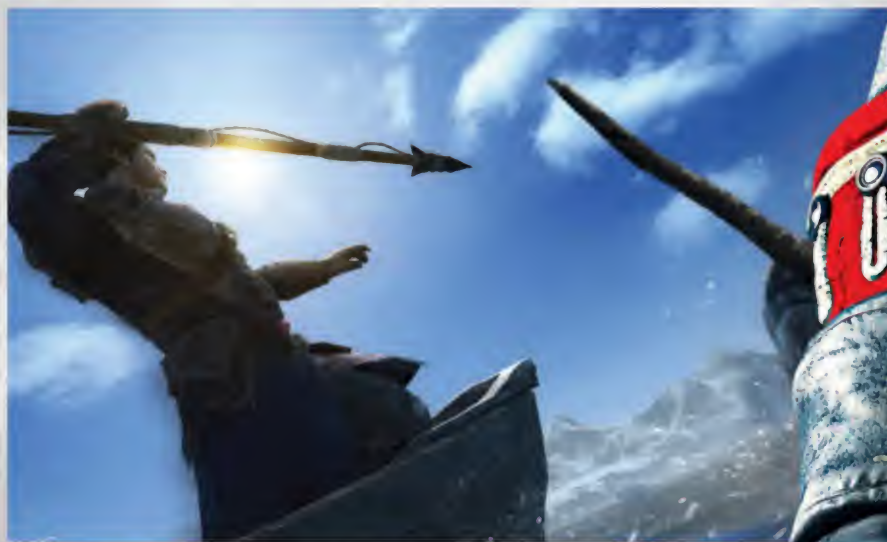
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ASSASSIN'S CREED

Assassin's Creed has two faces this year, represented by Unity's Arno and Rogue's Shay. We speak to the developers behind both games to find out what each title will offer





Ubisoft is doing something unique with its flagship franchise this year. Where other publishers continue to struggle with the dilemma as to whether to develop the next entry in their biggest series as a true next-gen title, or take advantage of the larger install base on older consoles and release a cross-gen title that's technically compromised as a result, Ubisoft has decided to sidestep the problem completely. With *Assassin's Creed*, we'll not be getting a cross-gen title that fails to take full advantage of the power of the PS4, nor will PS3 owners be missing out on the series this year as a result. Instead, we'll be getting two *Assassin's Creed* games in 2014: *Unity* for PS4 and *Rogue* for PS3.

"Our ambition with *Unity* was tremendous," *Unity*'s creative director Alex Armancio tells us. "For this reason, we decided from the very get-go that *Unity* could simply not exist for the previous generation of consoles." From the scale of the city of Paris in which *Unity* is set, to its crowds consisting of upwards of 5,000 people, Armancio explains that there are a number of features that make *Unity* a fundamentally current-gen experience. For Armancio, though, "a complete reinvention

of our core pillars" – navigation, stealth and combat – is what it really means to create a current-gen *Assassin's Creed* game.

Ultimately, that's what excites us the most about *Unity*: the idea that the game will wipe the slate clean, will give us new, interesting ways to play in the *Assassin's Creed* universe and finally address some of the lingering issues that have plagued the series since its inception. Before we get on to the ways in which *Unity* aims to reinvent *Assassin's Creed*'s fundamentals, though, we have to ask: what does all this mean for *Rogue*? Is it a game that's destined to be outshone by its sibling? A game that will be written off as obsolete before it has even had a chance? Let's not be so hasty.

"*Rogue* is an uncompromising triple-A *Assassin's Creed* experience," *Rogue* producer Karl Von Der Luhe tells us, pointing out that the game offers us things that *Unity* can't. "Playing as a Templar is a unique experience that can only be had with *Rogue*, and the return of the critically acclaimed naval combat in a fresh and iconic setting of the Arctic are just two of the reasons we are very confident with the game we are making."

Where *Unity* is taking risks, both in terms of moving to a new generation of consoles and in trying to restructure the series' foundations, *Rogue* is leveraging years of experience working with the PS3 and Ubisoft's knowledge of what's



△OX□ The Arctic, New York and the Appalachian River Valley are among the locations you'll visit in *Rogue*.



△OX□ *Unity* scales *AC* back to a single city environment but promises more detail in return.

"BEFORE ACIII, WE KNEW THAT WE HAD SOMETHING SPECIAL ON OUR HANDS WITH THE NAVAL GAMEPLAY"

worked for the series in the past. It might be playing it a little safe in that respect, but if it can give fans what they want, that is not necessarily a bad thing. Speaking of what fans want, it's worth noting that *Unity* will not include the brilliant naval combat that's become a much-loved feature of *Assassin's Creed*. With that in mind, it's easy to understand why Von Der Luhe is confident that *Rogue* will still draw an audience.

"Long before the release of *ACIII*, we knew that we had something special on our hands with the naval gameplay," Von Der Luhe explains. "How well it has resonated with fans and become such a core part of *ACIV: Black Flag* and *Rogue* has created a great deal of pride within Ubisoft Singapore." He tells us that the ship you will control in *Rogue*, the *Morrigan*, is smaller than the *Jackdaw* in *Black Flag*, making it quicker and more agile. It will also give you access to a few new toys.

"The *Morrigan* is equipped

with the Puckle Gun, an advanced free-aiming machine gun of the time, and *Burning Oil*, which can devastate chasing ships," says Von Der Luhe. "Other new weapons include the front carronades, charge ram and double round shot."

Perhaps more intriguing, though, is the way that the game's environment and interactions with other ships will add a different flavour to naval combat in *Rogue*. Taking place off the East coast of Canada and breaching Arctic environments, there will, naturally, be icebergs to deal with. Von Der Luhe tells us that icebergs can be used as temporary cover, or destroyed to create waves that disrupt enemy ships. That could come in useful, bearing in mind it won't only be warring British and French ships populating the seas, but gang ships with a crew trained by Assassins who are out to get you.

"The gang brig is capable of ramming the player and initiating boarding onto

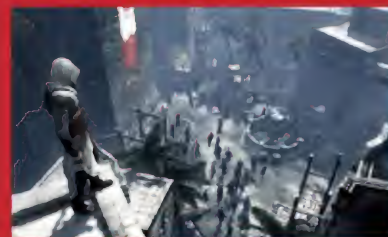


THE EVOLUTION OF ASSASSIN'S CREED



ASSASSIN'S CREED

The birth of the series.



2007

PARIS: A SIGHTSEER'S GUIDE

Unity's major landmarks revealed and explored



LES INVALIDES

Though its primary function was as a retirement home and hospital for military veterans, this iconic landmark also had a large stock of weapons and was raided by revolutionaries ahead of the storming of the Bastille.

THE LOUVRE

Now one of the world's most renowned museums, it was the French Revolutionary movement that transformed it into a place for the public. Will *Unity*'s story cover the events that led to that transformation?

NOTRE DAME

We've already had a glimpse of what one of Paris's most famous landmarks will look like in *Unity* and it's a very impressive rendering indeed. Let's hope the game's other locations match that level of detail.

THE BASTILLE

The storming of the Bastille is perhaps the event most deeply ingrained in popular knowledge of the Revolution. We expect to play a mission in *Unity* in which we join the people as they claim an important symbolic victory.

the player ship," says Von Der Luhe. "This intense fight on the Morrigan deck will require the player to quickly overcome the enemy crew, as losing too many Morrigan crew members will result in surrendering. The enemy crew will be led by an Assassin Captain, who is well experienced in boarding enemy vessels as we well know from *Black Flag*!"

Many will tell you that naval combat

has become one of, if not their single favourite feature of *Assassin's Creed* – a boon for *Rogue*. Given its absence in *Unity*, Ubisoft Montreal is left with a difficult task. It has to ensure that, when we play *Unity*, we aren't left perched atop the Paris skyline, looking wistfully into the distance, aching to travel across France and take to the oceans once again. If Ubisoft Montreal can deliver

on its promise that *Unity* represents, in Armancio's words, "a fresh start in the AC franchise", then it may just be that naval combat is not missed at all.

So, what is it that *Unity*'s offering us that's going to make it feel fresh? Well, let's start with what has to be the most striking addition to the series: four player co-op. "Co-op was something we wanted in *Unity* from its inception," says Armancio. "This was a feature that we, as developers, have wanted for a very long time. It is also the top requested feature from our fans."

Armancio tells us that there are two types of co-op mission in *Unity*. "Brotherhood missions are large scale 'black box' type missions that are based on a famous historical event and/or character of the French Revolution. These are massive open-ended missions that encourage complementary and imaginative play.



ASSASSIN'S CREED II

- Introduced the Notoriety system to the series.
- Streamlined parkour and added the ability to swim.
- The first appearance of an upgradeable HQ in the form of Villa Auditore.



"EVERY TIME A HEIST MISSION IS PLAYED, WE CHANGE GUARD NUMBERS, PATROLS AND BLOCK CERTAIN PATHS"

Because these missions are built in a 360-degree fashion they are replayable in a variety of ways," Armancio says. Then there are 'Heist missions', in which you will be tasked with sneaking into a guarded area without being detected and making off with some loot. Just as with Brotherhood missions, Armancio tells us that heists have been designed to be replayable. "Every time a Heist mission is played, we change guard numbers, patrols and block or open certain paths," he says.

After hearing about the introduction of co-op in *Unity*, we had some concern that playing with three friends might make things a little too easy, but *Unity*'s design director Bruno St-André tells us that's something the team has carefully considered. "Our biggest challenge

came from our brand itself," St-André says. "Each player is an Assassin so is therefore powerful by themselves, so we needed to make sure all players were meaningful within the group and they all had things to perform for the group."

St-André explains that *Unity*'s skill system is constructed in such a way that you should be able to easily differentiate your character from other players, to specialise in particular aspects of the game to the effect that you can each play different roles. In combination with better AI, St-André said that this aspect of specialisation means that the game's co-op missions will "require you to play together".

While co-op will naturally necessitate a different approach to missions design, Ubisoft Montreal isn't stopping there.



ΔOX□ Ubisoft says that combat will be more challenging in *Unity* than in previous ACs.



ΔOX□ Killing the rich and powerful! Viva la revolution!



Single-player missions are getting a revamp too. "What makes *Unity* unique is that we really wanted to focus on the freedom of choice. To us, this is probably the freshest element in this next-generation reinvention of *Assassin's Creed*, because it encompasses and focuses all of our other innovations," says Armancio.

What that means in practice is that assassinations can now be approached in a variety of different ways. There are multiple entrances and exits to buildings, some of which can only be discovered or unlocked by investigating the area for clues and items. Similarly, following enemies and listening to their conversations might yield information that unlocks a specific and unique assassination opportunity. As St-André explains it, the intention is to allow you to "make choices and be creative through gameplay," to make sure that "objectives support that and adapt to the player's actions more than forcing them to play one way". This description of a more open-ended approach to assassinations, reminiscent as it is of games like *Blood Money* and *Deus Ex*, sounds like a welcome change to a series that has suffered from being too linear at times.

Other changes to the formula give us further cause for optimism. There is now a stealth stance and a full cover system, with the aim of adding a layer of



ASSASSIN'S CREED: BROTHERHOOD

- Δ Added a competitive multiplayer mode.
- Δ Allowed you to recruit Assassins to your cause and send them on missions.
- Δ Increased the pace of combat, adding killstreaks and dual executions.

2010





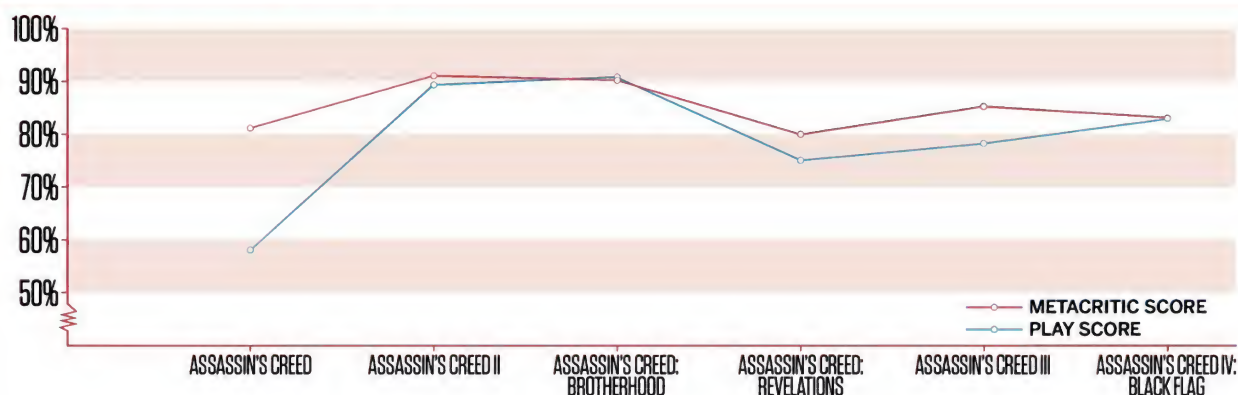
depth to stealth gameplay. *Assassin's Creed* games can be a bit clumsy when it comes to stealth, so as fans of the stealth genre, it's exciting to see that Ubisoft Montreal seems to be making a conscious effort to bring that aspect of the series into the foreground. After all, there's always been something appealing about playing as an Assassin who uses a combination of acrobatics, distractions, sneaking, quick thinking and social stealth to take out a target without anyone ever knowing you were there. That *Unity* could provide a better toolset to live out that fantasy makes it incredibly appealing.

Parkour has been revamped, too, with Armancio describing a system that's more flexible than in past games. "In *Assassin's Creed: Unity*, our navigation system allows Arno to operate on different planes of motion within three control schemes; two on the vertical plane and one on the horizontal plane. Parkour is the fastest way to get from Point A to Point B using the environment," he explains. "Free running is basically the same concept, except using flashier moves to complete that sequence, like doing tricks with your body".

Armancio reveals that despite some of the moves in *Unity* being ostentatious, they're all possible, given that mo-cap actors performed them. Some of those moves will be gained as part of the story's progression, while some can be unlocked using skill points. "One of my favourite new moves and one of the coolest ones I think you'll see in the game is called the Base Jump," says Armancio. "The player jumps out, arms outstretched, almost looks like he's going into a leap of faith and then catches a pole right at the last second."

FACTS & FIGURES

FRANCHISE RATINGS



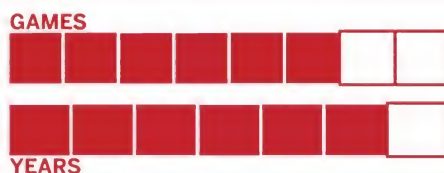
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Approximate number of employees at Ubisoft's largest studio – *Unity* developer, Ubisoft Montreal



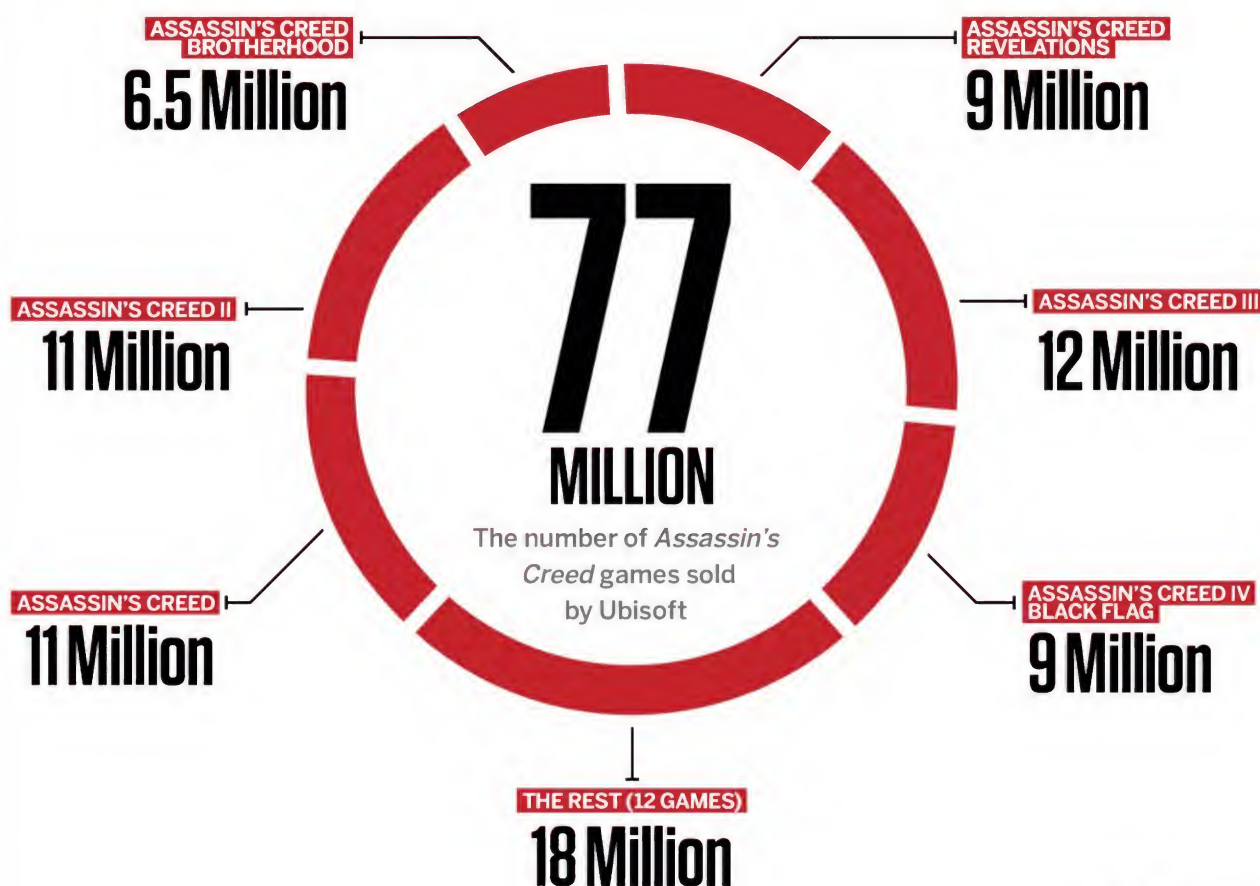
Number of *Assassin's Creed* games, including handheld and mobile titles

8 in 7



Rogue and *Unity* will be the seventh and eighth mainline *Assassin's Creed* games in the series' seven-year history

FRANCHISE SALES



GO WITH THE FLOW

START



Our target enters Notre Dame; now is the time to scope it out.

ROUTE 1



You could just go full action on this noise, perhaps by inciting a riot and battling your way in to kill the target in plain sight. Don't expect that to be easy...

ROUTE 2

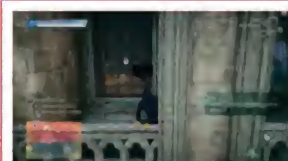


Using *Unity*'s new stealth mode, we find a priest due to meet Sivert in Notre Dame's confessional booth. We take him out with a view to taking his place, Agent 47 style.

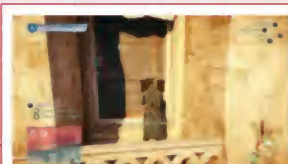
ROUTE 3



We hear some miscreants being yelled at by a priest for stealing a key to Notre Dame. We track them down using eagle vision and steal the key undetected.



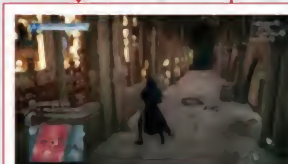
After scaling the side of Notre Dame, you can use your lockpick skill (providing you've unlocked it) to slip inside.



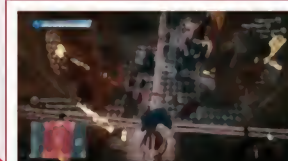
Now we've got the key, we can scale Notre Dame and use it to gain access to a balcony window.



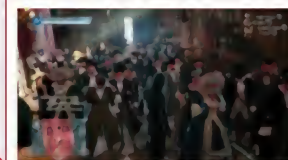
The option to escape the way we came in is one we can take, climbing back on onto Notre Dame and scaling its roof to find another way down and avoid the guards.



We're inside. After taking out this guard silently, it's time to scope out the area.

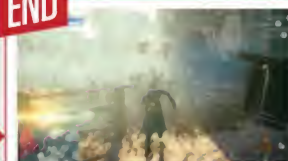


Manoeuvring our way above our target, we're in a perfect position to perform an air assassination, though that would leave us having to fight off a lot of guards.

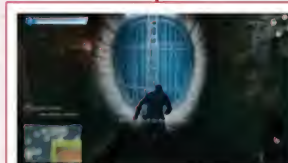


Making our way down to the ground floor, we hide in a hay cart (no, we don't know why it's in a church either) and watch our target move out of the main hall.

END



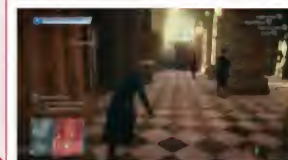
After escaping from Notre Dame, we slip into the crowd and anonymity. Mission accomplished.



Pursued by our enemies, we dash towards safety.



Using Eagle Vision, we discover a secret entrance that leads down into the Paris catacombs. Let's take it!



We follow our target to the confessional – if you unlocked the confessional kill, you can enter the booth and help him meet his maker. Time to move on to the next phase...

ASSASSIN'S CREED: REVELATIONS

- The ability to craft a variety of bombs was introduced.
- Tower defence sections made their first (and last) appearance.
- Revelations included first-person platforming sections where you play as Desmond.



2011



△×△×△ Ubisoft says *Unity* will support crowds of up to 5,000!



"THE FRENCH REVOLUTION WAS THE PERFECT TEMPLATE FOR ASSASSIN'S CREED"

Armancio told us that the new parkour system has such a sense of speed and flow that the team considered getting rid of the iconic leap of faith, wondering if the new navigation mechanics had made it obsolete (don't worry, the leap of faith is still in there). If *Unity*'s new navigation mechanics are as flexible as Armancio suggest, then its another change that will be beneficial – *Assassin's Creed*'s introduction and development of free running was innovative in the series' early history, but is probably due a more radical revamp to iron out some of the system's frustrations.

As encouraging as these tweaks to *Assassin's Creed*'s core mechanics are, let's not forget that it's not just the mechanics of *Assassin's*

Creed that have won over its fanbase. There's also the fastidious level of attention the games' developers have always paid to each iteration's setting, their love of both the location itself and the history that made it. You can hear that passion in Armancio as he talks about *Unity*.

"The French revolution was the perfect template for an *Assassin's Creed* game for a variety of reasons," he says. "The Revolution itself was far more than a simple rebellion against an unpopular King; it was a total rejection of repressive feudal principles that had endured for centuries. The French Revolution gave the middle finger (and the guillotine) to anyone who supported the old social order of Europe.

"It was also a time of firsts," he continues. "It included the first-ever assault on the concept of organised religion, the first genuinely populist uprising (which was put down by other

revolutionaries) and the first modern police state, with show trials, informants and public executions.

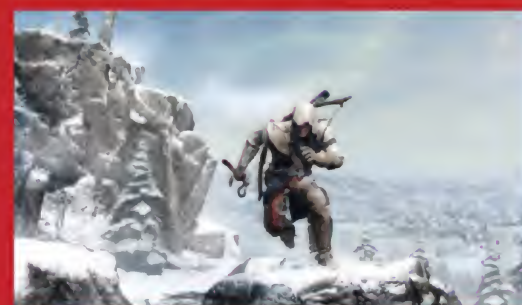
"It included the first clear enunciation of modern liberal principles that we, in the West, now take for granted. The French Revolution saw the birth of the charter of rights; it's the inauguration of a new world." For those reasons, Armancio tells us that Ubisoft felt that it's an era that the fans will be just as enamored with as the developers are.

We'd expect that same passion to be evident in the story being told in *Assassin's Creed: Rogue*, but in that case, it's not so much the 'real' historical setting that's caught our attention, but rather the new perspective that the game could give us on the series' own history as we take on the role of Shay Patrick Cormac, a Templar who joined the order as part of his quest for revenge after being betrayed by his former Assassin brothers.



ASSASSIN'S CREED III

- △ Brought hunting to the *Assassin's Creed* series.
- △ Allowed you to take to the seas, bringing naval combat to the series for the first time.
- △ Introduced large natural environments and the ability to free run through them.



2012

"PLAYING AS A TEMPLAR HAS BEEN SOMETHING OUR FANS HAVE BEEN ASKING FOR AND EXPECTING FOR QUITE SOME TIME"



"Playing as a Templar has been something our fans have been asking for and expecting for quite some time," Ubisoft Sofia managing director Ivan Balabanov tells **Play**. "It is something we have considered for a while now, and with the release of *Rogue* we have the perfect opportunity to give our fans the opportunity to experience what it is like to be on 'the other side.'"

In letting us take on the role of a Templar and fight for their order, we wondered if Ubisoft was giving us a chance to play the bad guy in *Rogue*, but it's not as simple as that. "Until now, the *Assassin's Creed* brand has been portraying, with small exceptions, the point of view of the Brotherhood, and it is only natural to perceive them as the good ones," Balabanov

explains. "*Assassin's Creed: Rogue*, however, will provide you a different point of view and will underline the grey areas where it is difficult to differentiate good from bad."

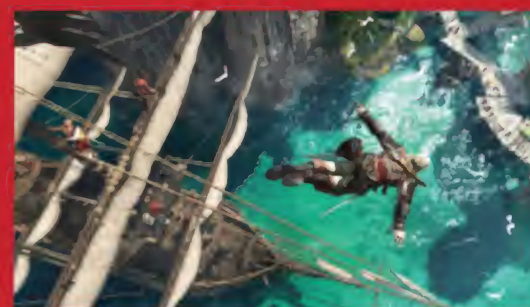
Getting a different perspective on the Templars and the Assassins could be fascinating, particularly if it makes us reevaluate our thoughts on the merits of the rival groups, their principles and their approach, as Balabanov hints. "The two sides bitterly fight with each other, but this does not make one of them the heroes, and the other one the villains. It is more complex than this, and I believe we portray this well in *Rogue*."

Balabanov tells us that the desire to show a different aspect of the Templars and the Assassins is the reason that you will take control of Shay as an Assassin and then see him undergo the transformation into

△×□ This need not be a familiar sight, given improvements made to stealth.

ASSASSIN'S CREED IV: BLACK FLAG

- △ Brought naval combat and pirating to the forefront.
- △ Toned down the series' much-maligned modern day segments.
- △ Sea shanties! Anyone who has played *Black Flag* will tell you how awesome they are.



2013



Templar. "We're able to expose – and [allow] the players to explore – both the differences and similarities between the two orders," he says. In doing so, Ubisoft aims to "portray the [Templars] as a complex and rational organisation and not just a mono-dimensional cartoon-style villain".

However, this doesn't mean that there isn't an edge to Shay's character. Indeed, Balabanov tells us that Shay's "unshakeable determination" often results in aggression and brutality. Balabanov explains that in telling the story of Shay's quest for revenge, *Rogue* is, "the darkest chapter in the history of the brand yet." We look forward to hearing more of that story and finding out whether it can make us view the Assassins in a new light.

With *Unity* and *Rogue*, what we have are two games that, despite their shared legacy, are appealing

for very different reasons. In the case of *Rogue*, we have a game that promises to give us a new perspective on the series' two warring factions through AC's first Templar protagonist as it caps off the story of its North American trilogy. It is a game that not only draws on *Assassin's Creed's* established storyline, but on its established strengths – in particular its naval combat.

In contrast, *Unity* wipes the slate clean, not only in starting a new narrative cycle, but in seeking to redefine what an *Assassin's Creed* game is with a new approach to mission design, the introduction of co-op and the addition of new stealth, parkour and combat mechanics. In short, what we have is one game that draws on the very best of *Assassin's Creed's* past, and one that may just define its future.



△OX□ This is the closest you'll get to naval combat in *Unity*.



ASSASSIN'S CREED UNITY

- ✦ Brings co-op to *Assassin's Creed*, allowing up to four of you to play together.
- ✦ Restructures *Assassin's Creed's* missions to make the game less linear and allow players to tackle objectives in a variety of ways.
- ✦ Reworks parkour mechanics and introduces a true stealth mode.

2014

ASSASSIN'S CREED ROGUE

- ✦ *Rogue* is the first game to feature a Templar as its main protagonist.
- ✦ New weapons appear in *Assassin's Creed: Rogue*, including an air rifle that can fire a variety of projectiles, and a grenade launcher.
- ✦ It will introduce environmental traps that allow you to take out groups of enemies.

2014

ETA Q1 2015

DEV KOJIMA PRODUCTIONS

PUB KONAMI

TWITTER @HIDEO_KOJIMA_EN

Metal Gear Solid V: The Phantom Pain

Tactical Multiplayer Operations



ALSO COMING
TO PS3

AFTER WHAT WE'VE seen of *The Phantom Pain* over the last year or so, and having played its 'prologue', *Ground Zeroes*, Konami doesn't really have to do anything to sell us on *MGSV* any more. What Konami

has done, though, is manage to get us excited about an aspect of the game that has been far from the forefront of our minds up until this point: multiplayer.

We already knew that base building would be a key feature of the next *MGS* game, with the Fulton Recovery System introduced in *Peace Walker* making a return, allowing you to strap a parachute to anything from soldiers, to vehicles, to sheep, and send those resources back to Mother Base.

What we didn't realise, though, was how closely those base building mechanics would be linked to multiplayer. Sure, talk about how Mother Base can be invaded provided intimations about what Kojima Productions might have in store, but it's only now that we really know what we can expect from the game's multiplayer mode and it looks very interesting indeed.

It turns out that when you're developing Mother Base, what you're actually doing is building a base that another player can try to conquer. The bigger you make it, the more difficult it'll be for them to get to the end and succeed in their mission. You'll also want to research new tech to reinforce your security, increasing your chances of stopping

"YOU CAN BLOW YOUR FRIEND TO
PIECES JUST AS THEY THINK THEY'RE
ABOUT TO TASTE VICTORY"



△×□ This is *Metal Gear Solid*, so of course cardboard boxes make a return. Expect plenty of other silly stuff, too.



potential invaders in their tracks. In a recent demo, we saw an automated gun camera mounted on an outside wall, infrared lasers placed along the base's walkways and patrolling drones blocking the path of the invader from whose vantage point we were watching; you'd imagine there'll be plenty of other gadgets to unlock, too.

As the demo rolls on, it becomes apparent that *The Phantom Pain*'s multiplayer is built to encourage some sort of back and forth between rivals. Our invader used the Fulton Recovery System to take back resources that had been stolen from

△×□ In order to tie together all of the disparate events seen in various trailers, *The Phantom Pain* is going to have to be huge...



△×□ Various prosthetic arms will each offer new abilities and options. What craziness will we see here?

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- △ An expansive open-world map that dwarfs what we saw in *Ground Zeroes*.
- The 'Phantom Cigar' – a device that will let you jump between different times of day.
- × The chance to find out how the legend that is Snake became the notorious Big Boss.
- Incredible visual fidelity, provided courtesy of Kojima Productions' impressive FOX Engine.



SHARE THIS



△×□ The various logos we've seen serve as a stand-in for Diamond Dogs suggest you can name your Mother Base faction.

I'M YOUR SHADOW!

Claim your bragging rights

Now that we know that its possible for you to face your friends in Snake-on-Snake confrontations that mirror the Solid/Liquid rivalry, we also know that we're going to want bragging rights. Stalk your intruder without them spotting you and, if you're lucky, you'll get some embarrassing footage of them being taken down by one of your lowly guards. Failing that, finish them yourself at the last possible moment.

them, before making the thief pay the price by pilfering some of theirs. We like the idea of gaining bragging rights over friends by besting their base, but we have some concern that the tit for tat nature of the system could make resource collection a chore as possession of said resources swings between yourself and your opponent in a pendulum-like fashion. Hopefully the game's multiplayer is designed in such a way that this won't be an issue.

The climax of the demo showed the Snake that we were following coming under RPG fire from... huh? Snake?! Yes, it seems that players can be alerted that their base is being infiltrated, meaning that you can blow your friend to pieces just as they think they're about to taste victory. Delicious.

While the multiplayer reveal was the headline of the showing, it wasn't the only thing that caught our eyes. What also intrigued us was the way that the game will seemingly force players to employ a wide range of tactics in order to be successful in its single-player campaign. This became apparent as Konami showed the same mission that was demoed at E3 being tackled in an entirely different fashion. What's noteworthy is not so much the

option to approach your objectives in a variety of different ways – though that is welcome – but rather that the AI will adapt to techniques that you've used in the past, making it a necessity. For example, if you've taken a lot of enemies out with the classic tranquiliser dart to the head, you might find that next time you roll into town, your foes are wearing metal helmets in a bid to thwart that approach. There are even companion characters to help you out, including barely-clad sniper Quiet and an adorable eyepatched wolf hound called DD.

We still have one or two concerns about *MGSV*, most notably whether the darker narrative tone Kojima seems to be grasping for will clash with the game's sillier elements. However, we know from playing *Ground Zeroes* that the game has a strong base. Everything that we've seen that's being added to that, from new mechanics to multiplayer, leaves us feeling pretty damn positive.

Paul Walker-Emig

METAL GEAR SOLID V: THE PHANTOM PAIN is being developed at Kojima Productions' Mother Base. Check the website for more details: www.konami.jp/mgs5

△×□ We must admit, we do like the fancy way that *The Division* overlays its map onto the game world rather than snapping to a menu.



ETA Q4 2015

DEV UBISOFT MASSIVE

PUB UBISOFT

TWITTER @THEDIVISIONGAME

Tom Clancy's The Division

The cover-shooter that's also an MMORPG



THE MORE WE learn about *The Division*, the more intrigued we become. At a cursory glance, you'd be forgiven for thinking that the game

is another identikit third-person cover shooter, but, look a bit closer and you'll find some interesting threads to pull at, threads that we think could lead to interesting places.

Of course, the first thing that makes the game stand out from others of its ilk is its online element – the fact that you'll be playing as part of a team made up of real players, battling a combination of AI enemies and rival teams. If all the fuss surrounding *Destiny* doesn't prove that there's mileage in that idea, then we don't know what will. However, while *The Division's* online element certainly interests us, it's not what's drawn our attention back to Ubisoft's highly anticipated shooter. Rather, it's the fact that *The Division* is looking more and more like an RPG.

The first hints of the game's RPG-like nature lie in how you build your character and team. Ubisoft has been clear that it's possible, even necessary, for you to construct your character's abilities and loadout with a specific role in mind – to focus on healing, or pure damage dealing, for example – and, as such, to construct a well-balanced team where each member complements and supports their

comrades. Obviously, that means that there will be an upgrade system through which you'll unlock abilities and weapons. The only concern there is that, after pursuing a certain set of skills, what do you do if you end up playing online with other players whose characters have a similar build to you? Fear not. While it hasn't provided a great deal of detail on how skill upgrades will work, Ubisoft has said that it won't be locking people into particular skill trees. Rather, it sounds as if you will have points that can be reallocated between weapons and abilities as you please. That makes sense; having the flexibility to adjust your character won't just aid experimentation, but should ensure that you don't have your online experience ruined by, for example, being chucked into a team solely constructed of medics.

Essence of RPG can also be detected in the way that you will have to manage the various districts that make up the fictional New York in which you'll be playing. Every district will have three ratings: security, contagion and morale. The security rating tells you how likely it is you will be attacked while travelling through that particular district, contagion denotes the likelihood of being infected with the virus plaguing New York and morale relates to how likely it is you will receive assistance from citizens inhabiting that area. As to that last stat, we're not sure whether that

means that you could be supported by AI characters during combat, if citizens will give you items, or if there will be a combination of those kinds of things, but it sounds interesting nonetheless. As for the other two statistics, we can be a bit more definitive. Lower the security rating enough and it'll be possible to establish a base of operations in that district (given that we're asserting that *The Division's* got a lot of RPG elements, you'll not be surprised to hear that the base is upgradeable). As far as we can discern, contagion doesn't seem like a stat that you can affect, but a way of pacing the game – you'll need a better gas mask to get into areas with a higher contagion rating.

Hearing about the way in which *The Division* is blending RPG elements with cover shooting, we've a renewed curiosity about the game. After being delayed, there was a sense that it had slipped into the periphery somewhat, its attention grabbing reveal slowly fading into the memory. Now that we've started to get some details on what to expect from its gameplay mechanics, though, *The Division* has grabbed our attention once again.

Paul Walker-Emig

TOM CLANCY'S THE DIVISION is being developed at Ubisoft Massive's secure HQ. Check the website for more details: tomclancy-thedivision.ubi.com



"THE DIVISION IS LOOKING MORE AND MORE LIKE AN RPG"

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?



Form a team with your friends and experience what the game has to offer together.




The way it combines co-op play against AI enemies with team based PvP.




Courtesy of the Snowdrop engine, *The Division* looks absolutely incredible.



Being able to upgrade your character with abilities that support your play-style.


 You can jump into *The Division* on a tablet and take control of a drone in order to help out your buddies.

WHAT YOU'RE SAYING...

 From what I've seen in gameplay trailers, it looks amazing!
@AllGray64

 Meh
@BenMorrow1

 Stoked for it
@Kolt26

 High expectations. Curious to see if Ubi can keep an online game alive and active for more than a few months this time.
@TimmyDeCrane



△○×□ The game is being described as a road trip, hence the snazzy car.



△○×□ Yeah, maybe pissing off a herd of these things wasn't the best idea...



ETA 2015 | DEV SQUARE ENIX | PUB SQUARE ENIX | TWITTER @SQUAREENIX

Final Fantasy XV

Road trip!



AT THE TOKYO Game Show, we finally got another look at the elusive *Final Fantasy XV* and we must say, we're pretty positive about what we saw. The 'lads on a road trip' vibe that we got from the game's disappointingly homogenous cast of characters as we saw them cruising in their sleek, black car was a bit odd but, even then, we couldn't help but be rather struck by the game's extremely impressive visuals.

One thing that's still not clear from the trailer is the extent to which *Final Fantasy XV* is a JRPG and the extent to which it is an action game. As we witnessed the game's protagonists fighting together against armoured humans, giant mammoth-like creatures

and cave-dwelling monsters, we got the impression that it leans towards the latter. That's not necessarily a good or bad thing, but it will be interesting to see whether *Final Fantasy XV* will see the series move even further from its RPG core.

Leaving the mechanics of combat aside, the footage hinted at a couple of new elements that we can perhaps expect from the game. At one point, we saw a teleportation mechanic employed to jump from the floor to the top of a tall metal structure, suggesting that there may be some mild platforming and/or exploration elements based around teleportation. More eye-catching, though, was the moment that we saw an absolutely colossal tortoise-like monster (it's more intimidating than it

sounds) rise from the ground. We didn't get to see a battle with that creature, but if the intention is to tease epic *God of War III*-style boss battles, then we're 100 per cent on board.

With *Final Fantasy XV* being subject to so many delays over the years, we've had our concerns, but what we're seeing now gives us cause for optimism. Square Enix says there'll be a demo in March, so we eagerly look forward to seeing how the game is progressing then.

Paul Walker-Emig

FINAL FANTASY XV is being developed (as it has been for many, many years) by Square Enix. Check the website for more details: finalfantasyxv.com

"IF THE INTENTION IS TO TEASE
EPIC GOD OF WAR III-STYLE
BOSS BATTLES, THEN WE'RE
100 PER CENT ON BOARD"

ETA 18 NOVEMBER

DEV UBISOFT MONTREAL

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TWITTER @FARCRYGAME

Far Cry 4

A bit of Déjà vu?



ALSO COMING
TO PS3

A CRITICISM THAT'S often levelled at Ubisoft is that its games are designed by the numbers. In some cases, we'd disagree, particularly when it comes to the publisher's downloadable library. With the likes of *Assassin's Creed* and *Far Cry*, though, it's hard not to see an element of that. Consider the mechanics that both series now share – hunting, climbing puzzles and so on – due to their success in previous games, for example. Or, the fact that *Far Cry 4* seems to be trying to give us another Vaas in the form of the unhinged Pagan Min. It's indicative of a design philosophy that prioritises pandering to popularity over creativity, relying as it does on a cut and paste cross-pollination of mechanics that makes games feel like they're designed by committee. The thing is, as much as we hate that kind of soulless design philosophy in principle, we can't honestly say that we care that *Far Cry 4* seems to be taking that approach.

One of the best things about *Far Cry 3* was the freeform approach you could take to liberating outposts littered throughout the game's world – the fact that you could silently take out an entire camp unseen, create chaos by manipulating the game's wildlife, strap C4 onto a vehicle and send a ball of flame careening into your enemies, or mix and match those disparate techniques as you see fit. Ubisoft is well aware that people liked that aspect of the game, so, sans that aforementioned design philosophy, it's focused on making that a key part of *Far Cry 4*. Not only will outposts return – along with new tools to conquer them – but *Far Cry 4* will feature four fortresses controlled by antagonist Pagan Min's key henchmen. These fortresses are effectively giant outposts, intended to provide us with the same kind of enjoyment, but on a larger scale. Sounds good to us.

If we're looking at successes that have influenced *Far Cry 4*'s development, we also have to consider

standalone DLC *Blood Dragon*. It seems that, in that success, Ubisoft detected an appetite for the ridiculous. It's scratching that itch by including reality-bending missions set in the mystical realm of Shangri-La in *Far Cry 4*. In these missions, unlocked by discovering ancient artefacts, or ingesting hallucinatory substances, you will be accompanied by a white tiger that you will help you take down strange, masked enemies in this otherworldly plane.

In fairness to Ubisoft, it doesn't look like *Far Cry 4*'s solely about trying to repeat or emulate what's been done before. For one thing, its world looks far more diverse than in the previous game, encompassing tight mountain paths, forests and bleak, snowy vistas. With its Himalayan setting, the verticality that the sequel brings to the party also looks like it could change things significantly, necessitating as it does the use of a grapple to scale steep climes, as well as bringing the wingsuit front and centre when it comes to navigating the game's environment.



“STRAP C4 ONTO A
VEHICLE AND SEND A BALL
OF FLAME CAREENING
INTO YOUR ENEMIES”



△○×□ Now THIS is precisely the kind of chaos that makes *Far Cry* brilliant. Here's hoping there'll be plenty of that.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- △ You can smash through a gate atop an elephant whilst wielding a sawn-off.
- You don't play as an annoying American dudebro this time, but as a native of Kyrat.
- × An RPG-like upgrade system lets you tailor protagonist Ajay's abilities to your own liking.
- An ecosystem populated with wildlife that will help or hinder you.



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CONTROLLED CHAOS

I did it my way...

△○×□ We don't yet know every animal that will appear in the game, but elephants surely have to be the best addition?

Surely the competition for most creative outpost liberation has to form the basis of any sharing that you're doing while playing *Far Cry 4*? While a perfect stealth run would be pretty cool to see, we reckon you can do much better

than that. Is it, for example, possible to attach plastic explosive to a rhinoceros, lure it into a camp and then blow it to pieces to finish off those that haven't been gored? We're going to find out.

Perhaps the most interesting addition, though, is the fact that you'll not only be able to explore *Far Cry 4*'s open world in co-op, but that your friends won't have to own the game in order to join you. As long as you're both PS Plus subscribers, your friend can download a free app that will let them jump into the game with you. Unsurprisingly, single-player campaign missions will be locked, but much of the fun to be had in the *Far Cry* games lies outside of the main campaign anyway. Whether taking down outposts in coordination, or trolling your friend by shooting open a tiger cage just as they stroll in front of it, we can see plenty of potential for laughs.

If *Far Cry 4* focuses on the series' strengths and can add one or two new elements to the formula, then it's going to be hard to be too down on it. We don't expect the game to be particularly surprising or original, but, providing it gives us more of what worked last time around, we don't expect this to stop the game from being plenty of fun to play.

Paul Walker-Emig

FAR CRY 4 is being introduced into the wild by Ubisoft Montreal. Check the website for more details:
far-cry.ubi.com



△○×□ Try not to get too attached to the characters – one wrong move and they could be gone for good.



△○×□ We get a strange Wesker vibe from this dude. Calling it right now, he's behind the whole mess.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?



Branching narrative where characters' lives hang on your every decision.



The impressive *Killzone* engine allows for some incredible PS4-only visuals.



Acting and writing talent from TV and cinema make for a movie-like experience.



All of the benefits of PS Move without actually needing the wand. Thanks, DualShock 4!

△○×□ Using a refined version of the *Killzone Shadow Fall* engine allows for some of the best facial rendering and animation yet seen on PS4. It certainly looks way better than it did on PS3, anyway...



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Until Dawn

I Know What Cabin In The Woods You Screamed At Last Summer



ANNOUNCING GAMES TOO early has been a common problem in the last few years, and there are casualties all over the place. We've seen games like *The Last Guardian* and *Tekken X Street Fighter* which seem to have slinked off into vapourware hell, things like *Resident Evil 5* that changed pretty much entirely from what was initially revealed and even games like *Watch Dogs*, where the long run-up to release led to the game getting hyped up to levels it could never possibly hope to live up to. And with the current transition to a new generation of hardware, there's now a fourth category as well – games that disappear altogether only to resurface some time later on new hardware. That's what happened with *Final Fantasy Versus XIII* (now *XV*), after all, and *Until Dawn* certainly won't be the last semi-familiar name to return to relevance on PS4.

Originally announced back when Sony was obsessed with its Wii Remote rival PS Move, *Until Dawn* looks a hell of a lot better on PS4 than it did on PS3. And not just on the obvious graphical level, either – gameplay has come a long way and the new emphasis on choice and consequence à la *Heavy Rain* or *The Walking Dead* is really interesting. The old Move functionality still carries over to a degree, so shining your torch around the grim cabins and dingy basements is as simple as angling your DualShock 4 accordingly. It's a little more jarring with the third-person viewpoint than it was back when the game

was first-person, but it still feels great when you pull into a character's viewpoint to investigate your surroundings. Navigation and exploration has a real Quantic Dream feel to it – make up your own mind whether that's a positive or a negative – to the point where we'd be amazed if David Cage's team hadn't been involved with the project on some level.

But while Cage's games like to think they're all mature and clever but often end up coming across as just a bit daft, *Until Dawn* takes the smarter approach of not taking itself half as seriously. From the setup (which sees eight friends trapped in a mountain cabin with someone/something out to

subtle version of *The Walking Dead*'s 'Clementine will remember that' pop-ups) and Sony is promising a game with such a complex web of narrative and gameplay choices that no two playthroughs will be exactly alike, the story continuing whether characters live or die and culminating in myriad endings based on your actions.

Helping push the cinematic angle are a cast of semi-familiar faces from TV and cinema, most notably *Heroes* cheerleader Hayden Panettiere and Brett Dalton from *Agents Of SHIELD*. The writing team also has something of a horror/thriller pedigree, roping in the likes of Larry Fessenden and Graham

"SONY IS PROMISING A GAME WITH A COMPLEX WEB OF NARRATIVE AND GAMEPLAY CHOICES"

get them) to the set pieces, you'll notice callbacks to pretty much every big teen horror movie in recent memory, but don't assume that this means there won't be much in the way of scare potential. It's amazing how much more intense some of the scenes here are than their Hollywood equivalent purely because you're the one calling the shots – the eight playable characters can all live or die based on your actions, and that's terrifying enough on its own. Any action that has consequences will result in a little butterfly icon appearing (a slightly more

Reznick to bring an air of credibility to proceedings. It's very cleverly put together to encourage bold and stupid behaviour, from what we've played – it's all too easy to shout at the dumb horror movie victim that wanders off alone but when that same choice comes up in the game, it's actually incredibly tempting just to spit in the face of every horror movie rule and break away from the pack. That's the sign of a writing team doing its job properly right there – it's not just cheesy dialogue they're responsible for, but also cunningly weaving each choice situation together so that there's no obvious 'right' answer.

Running on a modified version of the *Killzone Shadow Fall* engine, *Until Dawn* looks sharp as hell, another tick on a pretty healthy-looking checklist – not too shabby for a game that nobody gave two shits about just a few weeks ago. Kojima's clever *PT* stunt and indie games like *Amnesia* and *Outlast* have made horror games relevant again. But with so much to fine-tune in terms of making sure the narrative still works no matter who dies when (or not, as the case may be), it's little surprise that *Until Dawn* isn't due until next year. Still, if that gives the team time to deliver on the promise of a horror game with Quantic Dream-level branching narrative, we're absolutely fine with staying in the dark a little longer.

Luke Albigés

UNTIL DAWN is terrorising the good folks at Supermassive Games as you read this. Want to find out more? Check out www.supermassivegames.com

THE B-TEAM?

Given that it's *Assassin's Creed: Unity* on PS4 that's got the 'A-team' on it there's a concern that with *Assassin's Creed: Rogue* being developed by Ubisoft Sofia – the team most well known for *Assassin's Creed: Liberation* – we're getting the B-team. Having cut its teeth with *Liberation*, though, and after doing some work on *Assassin's Creed IV: Black Flag*, we think the team deserves a chance when it comes to *Rogue*.

BACK ON DECK

With *Assassin's Creed: Unity* stripping out the naval mechanics that were such a popular feature of *ACIII* and *Black Flag*, *Rogue* is going to be the only *Assassin's Creed* game that'll enable you to return to the high seas this year. The perception that *Rogue* is going to be 2014's second-rate *AC* game might be questioned by fans who will point to the allure that the inclusion of the series' much-loved naval mechanics will have. More shanties, please!

HUNTER BECOMES HUNTED

The fact that you'll be hunting down Assassins in *Rogue* means that you'll make yourself a marked man. Yes, that means that you'll have to keep your eyes and ears open for Assassins who will be using their trademark tricks to try and take you down. Whispers will warn you that an Assassin is near, at which point you'll want to take a look around to make sure there's no one lurking in the bushes or perched up high, preparing for an air assassination.

WRAP UP WARM

Assassin's Creed: Rogue is being billed as a conclusion to the North American trilogy that includes *ACIII* and *Black Flag* (*ACIII*'s Haytham Kenway will make an appearance) and will take place during the Seven Years War. *Rogue* is set in colder climes than the last *AC* game, with the game's naval portions taking place in the freezing North Atlantic Ocean. Other confirmed locations include the Appalachian River Valley and New York City.

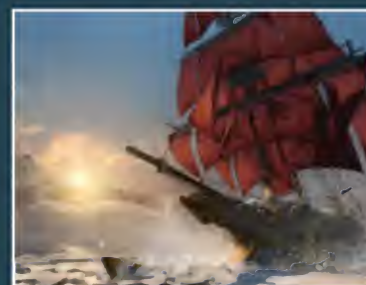
GOING TEMPLAR

You will be playing as Shay Patrick Cormac in *AC: Rogue*. Shay is a former Assassin who was already disillusioned with their methods before he was betrayed and abandoned by his brothers after a mission went terribly wrong. That left Shay a little nonplussed with his former friends. Shay joins the Templars – the archenemies of the Assassins – and so begins his quest to hunt down and kill those that betrayed him.

WILL WE MISS MULTIPLAYER?



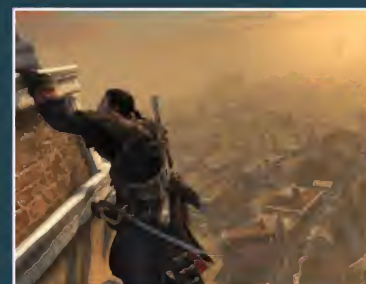
Ubisoft has decided that it's not going to include a multiplayer mode in either *Assassin's Creed: Rogue* or *Assassin's Creed: Unity*. The question is, will the decision to remove multiplayer this year harm the series?



Many *Assassin's Creed* fans will tell you that *AC*'s multiplayer modes are some of the best out there, that it is an undervalued aspect of the series and one of the major reasons that they love it so much.



Multiplayer is likely to be missed in *Rogue*, then. However, given that Ubisoft has always marketed *Assassin's Creed* as a single-player experience first and foremost, we don't think it'll harm the game too much, at least in terms of sales.



If you're one of those who is disappointed that there's no multiplayer in either of 2014's *AC* games, we say: don't be too despondent. We would be very surprised if multiplayer doesn't return to *Assassin's Creed* in the future.

Instant Expert

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Assassin's Creed: Rogue



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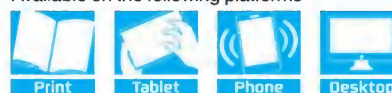
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Dead Island 2

Rise of the middle-class zombie



LET'S FACE IT: *Dead Island* was equal parts fun and wasted potential. Some ideas were a joy, others were a nightmare. As a cohesive experience,

it just didn't work. Undoubtedly, however, there was potential in the brand of stat-heavy zombie RPG it presented and so it's good to see a fully-fledged second attempt at putting things right.

This time around it's *Spec Ops: The Line* developer Yager in charge and tasked with giving *Dead Island 2* the kind of focus and polish the original never had. Having now played a small slice of it, what immediately stands out is the attempt at amplifying the tone of comical dread this series has tried to sell itself on.

Within five minutes of play we'd crafted ourselves an electrified knife, hit zombies tens of feet into the sky with a shovel, worked as a four-person co-op team to protect a karaoke set from the undead hordes and made a crude bomb out of gas canisters. If you're looking for a game to stream on Twitch or create a 'best of' YouTube video from then this is it. You'll get the hits.

Our demo takes place in a Californian suburb, blindingly bright houses set against a Hollywood hills backdrop. Unlike the first game, the playable characters aren't trapped in hell against their will... they're enthusiastic contestants within it. When the zombie apocalypse hit, these individuals of questionable sanity decided to stay behind and enjoy the free-spirited carnage it afforded.

We've played as just two of this bunch so far, both falling into traditional visions of RPG stereotypes. One of them is the insanely powerful Berserker, able to deal and withstand increased levels of damage. The other is the nimbler and subtler Speeder, able to move more quickly and assassinate the unaware from behind. Using both in cooperation is best; the Berserker taking the flak, while the Speeder flanks around behind for the instant kill.

There's plenty of loot dotted about for you to pick up and use to customise your killing spree. Investigating houses, supermarkets and petrol stations provides everything from shotguns to a

mystery, fire-based pickup that somehow coats your melee weapon in flame. It's difficult to understand the physics of such a concoction, but it seems to work just fine in the spirit of the game.

Setting this kind of scavenger-based mayhem within a sun-drenched, Californian understanding of wealth works surprising well – the environment is far more interesting than the drab surrounds of the last game and oddly inviting too. Killing zombies with shotguns and machetes amidst the picket fences and million-dollar swimming pools seems almost meant to be, given middle-class America's unjustified expectations and fears of impending doom... be that from terrorism, riots and/or zombies.

Towards the back end of our demo, a random event is initiated that tasks all players with meeting up at a particular point and surviving against a few waves of increasingly tough zombies, from the standard walkers to hulking, muscle-bound eight-footers. You're free to ignore such moments, but you're missing out on big chunks of XP if you do.

"SETTING THIS KIND OF SCAVENGER-BASED MAYHEM WITHIN A SUN-DRENCHED, CALIFORNIAN UNDERSTANDING OF WEALTH WORKS SURPRISING WELL..."



SHARE THIS



WATCH OUT BELOW!

Shovel knight

The lowly shovel isn't something we general consider to be a 'showpiece' weapon, but in *Dead Island 2* it's something of a fascination. With the correct timing and angle you can whack a zombie under the chin and watch as it flies high into the brilliant blue California sky.

How high can you send it? Well, we'll be testing exactly that come release day. Let the contest commence!



WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- ▲ Set in California, it's visually brighter and far more enticing than the original.
- Combat takes an exaggerated approach, with zombies and debris flying everywhere.
- ✕ Yager Development is building this sequel, taking over from series creator Techland.
- Los Angeles and San Francisco are confirmed locations in what promises to be a huge world.

Co-op, as a rule, is designed to be unrestrictive. Players are matched with each other within their area of the game, but nothing exists to force you to move around together or engage in the same activities. Playing together is more about killing together than locking you into missions and narrative as a group. Random moments, like the zombie waves, seemingly exist solely as a way to remind you explicitly that you're not alone and that playing with others is more fun.

That's exactly what Yager needs to do: make *Dead Island 2* fun. We've got enough RPGs treading serious ground already, punishing you for every little mistake made with your loadout, your skill trees and your quest decisions. Putting the emphasis on easily consumed diversity is certainly no bad thing, especially where zombies are concerned.

John Robertson

DEAD ISLAND 2 is being reanimated by Yager Entertainment. Check the website for more details: deadisland.deepsilver.com



▲✕□ Just by looking at them, it's easy to understand which zombies present the most immediate risk. Yeah, those yellow boils explode.

ETA 2015

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No Man's Sky

When bigger means better



18,446,744,073,709,551,616.

THAT'S HOW many planets there are in *No Man's Sky*. Developer Hello Games says that means that, even if a planet was discovered every second, we'd still be playing *No Man's Sky* for 585 billion years before we visit every last one. To say *No Man's Sky* is big, then, would be something of an understatement.

Of course, the fact that it's a huge game isn't necessarily a good thing in and of itself. Indeed, far too many game developers are in thrall to the idea that bigger is always better, bragging as they do about how vast and bloated their latest game is, seemingly oblivious to the fact that there's often something to be said for taking a more focused approach. We're going to give *No Man's Sky* a pass for making a fuss about its colossal scale, though. Why? Because in this case, we don't think the motivation for trying to communicate the scale of the game's universe arises out of some misplaced sense of braggadocio. Rather, Hello Games is making a big deal out of the size of the game because it is fundamental to the experience it wants you to have when you play it.

This is a game about exploration, about the joy of discovery and the sense of wonder that it can elicit. True, there are already many games that evoke those kinds of feelings, but *No Man's Sky*'s sheer scale gives it something unique. Whatever pleasure you might gain from 'discovering' something in any other game, whether in single-player, or as part of a shared world, you're perfectly aware that many other players have been there before. In *No Man's Sky*, that won't be the case. In this game, you really are a pioneer that will see places no human has ever set eyes on (with the game being procedurally generated, that includes the developers). That is what makes the game stand out and that is what makes us want to play it.

Another reason Hello Games is so keen to emphasise the scale of the game is that they want to play down its multiplayer element. Yes, *No Man's Sky* takes place in a shared universe, but this is not an MMO; the vast nature of the game's universe means that coming into contact with other players will be rare. We're fine with that, because as you take off from the planet on which you alone will start the game and start exploring the universe, the knowledge that you may be light years away from another human

△×□ Given that *No Man's Sky* is being developed by such a small studio, it's amazing how good it looks.



"IF A PLANET WAS DISCOVERED EVERY SECOND, WE'D STILL BE PLAYING NO MAN'S SKY FOR 585 BILLION YEARS"

player should help foster the sense that you're a lone, adventuring pioneer with a universe of infinite possibilities ahead of you. When you do come into contact with another player, the rarity of the event should only make that moment more special.

We get *No Man's Sky* in macrocosm, then, understand why it's important that the game is so huge. It's detail that we're a little short on. We've known for some time that you will be able to collect resources, trade, upgrade equipment and engage in combat both on land and in space. One new little titbit has been let slip, though. *No Man's Sky* will contain AI factions that will respond to you in different ways depending on how you interact with them. The developer has suggested that it is trying





△○×□ It'll be interesting to see how diverse planets turn out to be. We've seen deserts, forests and snow, so far – hopefully there's more.



WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- △ Each planet will have its own ecosystem, complete with strange fauna and flora.
- You're free to do as you please, but there is a narrative of sorts to discover.
- × It looks like it will have permadeath, adding an edge to every encounter.
- You can customise your ship and items based on your own style of play.

to keep this system as natural as possible – you won't get a big flashing notification on the HUD telling you that you're best mates with some faction or other after completing some predefined goals. But, if you consistently attack a particular faction, they're going to become hostile. Conversely, if you help a group out, they are going to be friendly towards you and this could provide you with some perks. Those wingmen that we saw in *No Man's Sky*'s E3 trailer, for example, were AI companions.

Despite that new bit of information, a lack of detail means we're diluting our excitement about the game by pointing out that we don't yet know how it actually plays. The concept is brilliant and the technology that supports it impressive. Now we just need to get our hands on it to see if it can live up to the promise.

Paul Walker-Emig

NO MAN'S SKY is being procedurally generated by Hello Games. Check the website for more details:
www.no-mans-sky.com



△○×□ There will be space stations littered throughout the universe with which you can trade (or fight, if you're the aggressive type).

A TROUBLED PAST

Wei Shen grew up in Hong Kong. The family moved to San Francisco when Shen was ten in an attempt to help his sister overcome her drug addiction. It didn't work. After she dies of an overdose, Shen is investigated by police Internal Affairs for the murder of her suppliers; he then decides to head back to Hong Kong.

GOING UNDERCOVER

On his return to Hong Kong, Shen goes deep undercover, infiltrating the Sun On Yee triad and gradually working his way up in order to take them down from the inside. His double life as police officer and gangster gets complicated, though, as he tries to meet the demands of two sets of superiors and develops friends and enemies on both sides of the fence.

ANATOMY OF... WEI SHEN

Sleeping Dogs – the game that splices open-world gameplay with action movie kung-fu, car chases and gun fights – is coming to PS4. That means Wei Shen is back, but who is he?

FISTS OF FURY

Given *Sleeping Dogs*' Hong Kong action movie influences, it's not surprising to find that Wei Shen is more than capable when it comes to hand-to-hand combat, with the game using an *Arkham*-like combat system. In this game, though, Shen can also use the environment to his advantage – hanging them up on a meat hook, or frying them using a fuse box, to give a couple of brutal examples.

LOOKIN' GOOD

When Wei Shen does anything he makes sure he does it in style. Being chased by a cop? Shoot out their tyre and watch as the car pirouettes spectacularly through the air. Chasing a car yourself? Climb out the door, jump onto your victim's roof and slide into the driver's seat. In a shoot out? Jump over a piece of cover to pop caps in glorious slow motion.

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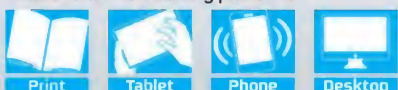


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PREVIEW ROUND-UP



WILD

WE LIKE MICHEL Ancel. As *Rayman: Origins* and *Legends* amply demonstrate, he makes good games. That means that we're excited about **WILD**, the first game from Ancel's newly formed Wild Sheep Studios. We don't yet know much about the PS4 exclusive, other than that it's open-world and allows you to play as any of the creatures that you might find roaming in it – human, boar, wolf, sheep, or whatever else you might fancy. As to what you actually do in the game, the trailer hints that it could be a survival game, a theory backed by Ancel's insistence that it's based on "experiencing new situations each time you play". We're not sure what to make of some of things we've seen in *Wild*'s trailer, but we're going to guess that the giant god-woman emerging from a tree and the headdress wearing skeleton are related to some sort of narrative. We look forward to finding out in 2015.

Carrying on with our theme of PS4 games that we don't know much about but definitely want to play in 2015, the next title to which we'd like to draw



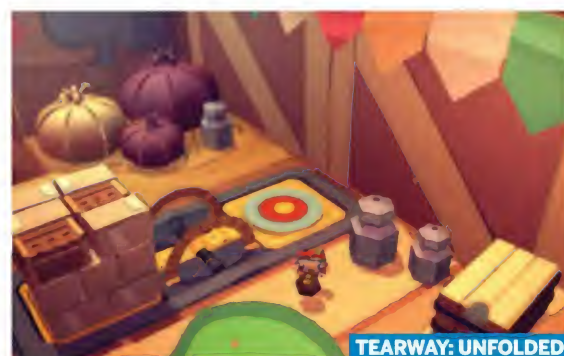
WILD

your attention is **THE TOMORROW CHILDREN**. A collaboration between Q-Games – the team behind the *PixelJunk* games – and Sony's Japan Studio, this delightful looking title mixes elements of *Minecraft* and tower defence games. You'll have to mine and collect resources and use these to create combatants to help you defend your town from invading monsters. Particularly interesting is that, while it is a single-player game, there will be an online element in that you'll see apparitions representing other players going about their business as you move throughout the game world. While it seems that you'll not interact directly with other players, you will be part of a town that each player will be working towards the betterment of and will be rewarded for making positive contributions to that town. Sounds very interesting.

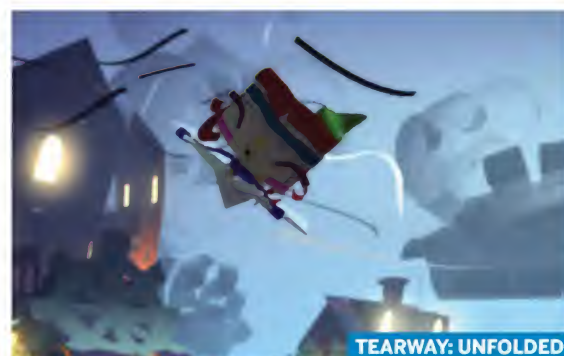
One title that we are very familiar with, given that we've very much enjoyed playing it on Vita, is *Tearaway*. You might think that means that we've little interest in its recently announced PS4 version, **TEARAWAY: UNFOLDED**. Well, you'd be wrong, because this isn't a straight port of the game that came out on Vita. Indeed, Media Molecule says the PS4 version will have loads of new content and that it's being built to make specific use of that console's features. Where the original game made use of the Vita's touchscreen, microphone and so on, *Tearaway: Unfolded* will use DualShock 4 specific features, like the lightbar and motion control. We're normally cynical about that kind of stuff, given that it invariably feels gimmicky, but in



THE TOMORROW CHILDREN



TEARAWAY: UNFOLDED



TEARAWAY: UNFOLDED

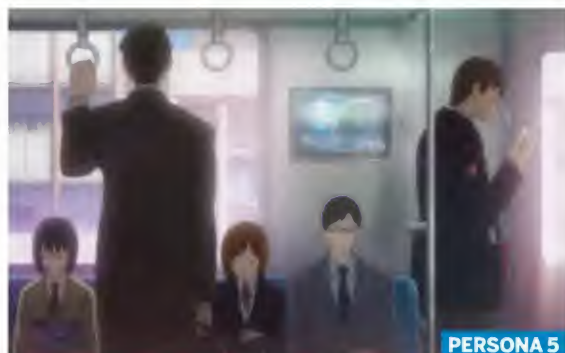


THE TOMORROW CHILDREN



PERSONA 5

“EVERY STANDOFF COULD END UP BEING FATAL AND EVERY ALLIANCE CAN END IN BETRAYAL”



PERSONA 5

light of the job Media Molecule did with the game on Vita, we're confident that the PS4 version of *Tearaway* will prove to be the exception to the rule.

Another game that is now getting a PS4 release is **PERSONA 5**, the latest entry in the high-school-set, Jungian-inflected JRPG series. The game had previously been announced for PS3 back in 2013, but at Sony's pre-Tokyo Game Show press conference, it was revealed that we'll now be getting a PS4 version, as well as a PS3 release, in 2015. The new trailer shown off at TGS suggests that *Persona 5* will be set in a big city, possibly a Ward in Tokyo, rather than in a small prefecture, as was the case with *Persona 4*. We don't yet know the name of the main character that appeared in the trailer, but it's interesting to note that they were wearing glasses while traveling through the city. Does this relate to the specs that characters need to wear in order to navigate *Persona 4*'s alternate TV world? And if so, why are they being worn in the real world in this trailer? We'll have to wait and find out.



DAYZ

IF YOU DIDN'T already know, *DayZ* is kind of a big deal. Initially developed as a mod for *ARMA 2*, *DayZ* proved so popular, registering 1 million users only three months after release, that its creator Dean Hall ended up working at *ARMA* developer Bohemia Interactive on a standalone version. Needless to say, after being released on PC via Steam's Early Access program, the standalone also proved to be a huge success, raking in over \$5 million in its first 24 hours on sale. Though we don't yet have a release date, we do know that this PC hit is on its way to PS4.

So, what do you actually do in *DayZ*? Well, the short answer is: survive. You'll start the game with nothing but the clothes on your body and a torch. You'll then have to avoid zombies as you explore the game's huge world, searching for

food and water to keep yourself alive, medical supplies to heal any injuries you pick up and weapons to defend yourself. The real danger in *DayZ* though, isn't the infected roaming the landscape, but the other players who are also trying to stay alive.

When you get close enough to other players, you can talk to them using voice chat and try to team up. But, competition for resources makes this a brutal world, so every standoff could end up being fatal and every alliance can end in betrayal (meaning that you'll lose all your progress and have to start from scratch). It's the tension that arises from the knowledge that every encounter could see you lose everything that *DayZ* players love so much. We look forward to experiencing that on PS4 next year.

AVAILABLE ON: PS4 RELEASE DATE: 2015



PS4 EVOLUTION

How your favourite games are better on PS4

MMOs

Massively multiplayer games have been a mainstay of PC gaming for some time, but how will they evolve and improve on PlayStation 4?

While gaming might have started out and developed primarily as a solo pastime, it didn't take long for players to cry out for the ability to game with friends and for developers to take heed. But even after consoles started coming equipped with multiple controller ports, the existence of multi-taps and J-Carts to allow even more players to get involved showed that there was a market for something bigger than two-, four- or even eight-player games. While some university networks had previously supported online games across all connected devices, it wasn't until the rise of the modern internet that this cap could be exceeded. And boy, was it ever exceeded.

Evolving from the multi-user dungeon games (or MUDs) on local networks, widespread internet availability finally made large-scale online games viable in the mid-Nineties. *Meridian 59* and *Ultima Online* offered visual rather than text-based interfaces and allowed communication, collaboration and conflict on a scale that no other game could boast, and the genre exploded from there – *EverQuest* and *Asheron's Call* both enjoyed huge success before the titan that is *World Of Warcraft* arrived on the scene and introduced the entire world to the term 'MMO'. The tech required to get a stable connection between hundreds or even thousands of concurrent online players as well as rendering visuals has always meant that MMOs sit some way behind the curve graphically, but it's also a major factor in why the genre never really stood a chance on console until

recently – streamlined MMO-esque experiences like *Phantasy Star Online* were as close as we got until the tail end of the PS2 era, where *FFXI* and a condensed *EverQuest* experience made the best use of the tech they could and games like *Monster Hunter* instead continued in the *PSO* vein, offering 'moderately' rather than 'massively' multiplayer online experiences.

We'd love to tell you that all that is about to change, but it's a bit late for that – it already has. Towards the tail end of the PS3's reign, a handful of games came along that attempted to smash the myth that MMOs couldn't work on console, and did so to varying degrees of success. *DC Universe Online* took a much more action-oriented approach to combat with only a handful of abilities to juggle at once, while *Final Fantasy XIV: A Realm Reborn* cleverly managed to invent about 20 new buttons on a DualShock controller via a neat modifier toolbar using the triggers to alter the function of each button pressed. With both games attracting praise for the ways in which they managed to tinker with both mechanics and inputs to replicate a classic PC MMO experience, that old fallacy was laid to rest. And so while developers clearly *can* create these experiences on PS4 (they already have, in the case of ports of both aforementioned games, as well as new prospects like *PlanetSide 2* and *EverQuest Next*), far more interesting is the way in which MMO sensibilities are beginning to break into mainstream gaming just as RPG mechanics did a good few years back.

A perfect starting point for examining this phenomenon is From Software's *Souls* series, ostensibly a fairly typical single-player RPG but with an insane amount of complex stuff going on behind the scenes. While they can't interact directly, players can see the echoes of other nearby souls, leave helpful (or not-so-helpful) messages for them and even

"FINAL FANTASY XIV MANAGED TO INVENT ABOUT 20 NEW BUTTONS ON A DUALSHOCK CONTROLLER"

136
101
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117

5 THINGS EVERY MMO NEEDS



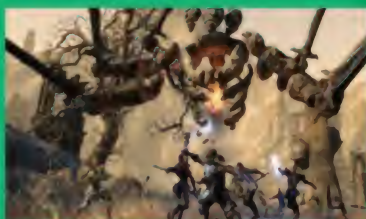
VARIETY

While there's only so much quests can ask of players in the confines of a game's mechanics, it's important that MMOs mix things up as much as possible and offer loads of different things to do.



ENDGAME

Whether the level cap is 10 or 100, (overly) dedicated gamers will always hit the level cap by the end of launch week. This is usually where the real game begins...



CLASSES

Allowing players to assume specific roles is crucial, so making each class as interesting to play as the rest is key – if healing is boring, there'll be nobody to keep you alive during raids.



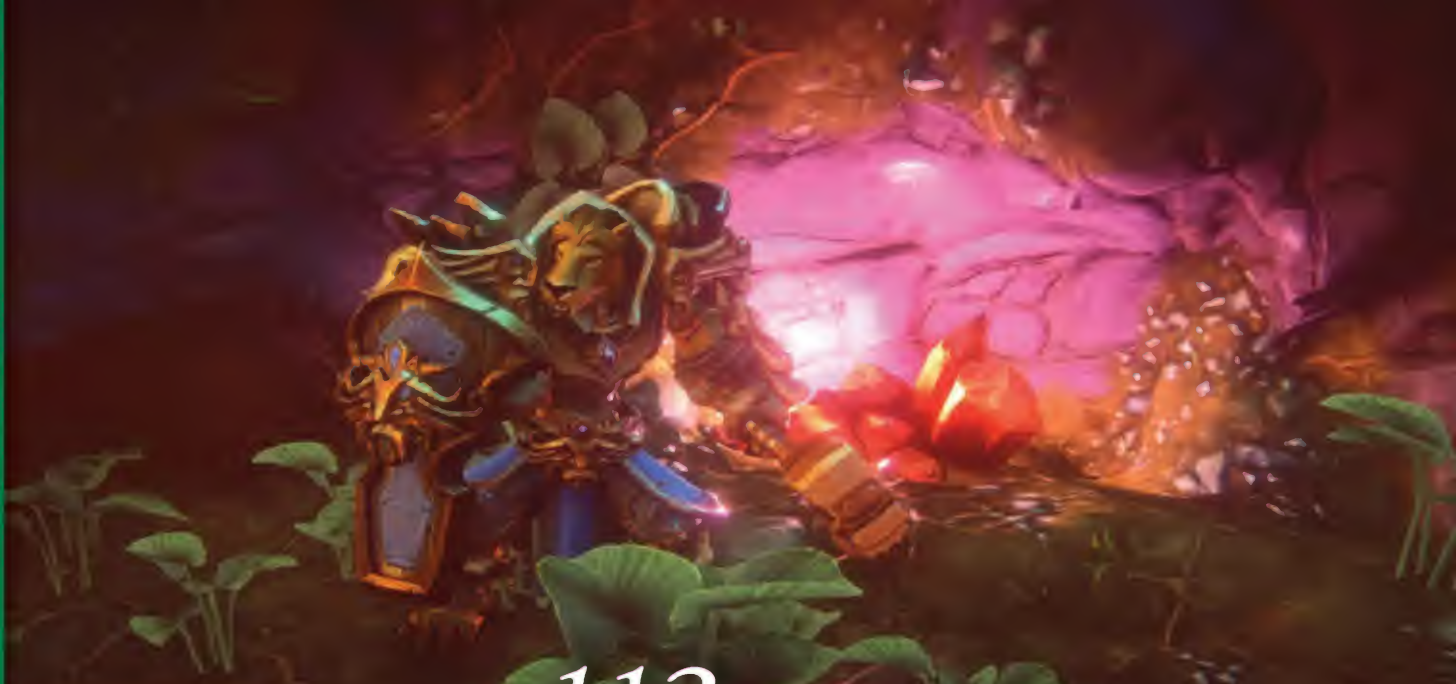
SUPPORT

You can't just put out an MMO and leave it – players will quickly be done with its content and move on. Seasonal/timed events offer reasons to return regularly, as do full new content drops.



MODERATION

Similarly, you can guarantee that not all of the community will behave themselves and mods/GMs need to be ready to deal with everything. Abuse, exploits, gold selling, duping...



△○×□ The voxel-based world of *EverQuest Next* will make for some amazing interactions between characters and environments.

112
143 CRITICAL
121
118

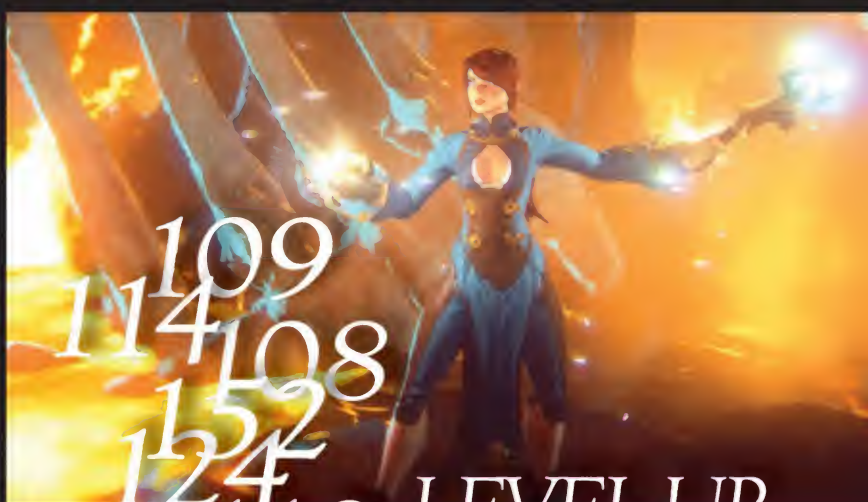
watch how they died to help preserve their own lives, as well as calling on the support of others for co-op boss runs if needed. But it's the progressive approach to PvP that really cements the MMO link, with nefarious players able to enter the worlds of others at will – sure, it's all matchmaking-based rather than the direct interaction you'd have in an MMO, but it's a solid step towards the connected future that so many games are leading us towards. This side of PS4 *Souls* successor *Bloodborne* has yet to be revealed but based on prior form, it's safe to assume that From has something up its sleeve.

Even pure single-player games have been shaken with a twist of MMO since the advent of leaderboards, turning every run into a competition with friends and strangers alike as you gun for better placement. *Need For Speed's* ingenious Autolog system took this to the next level by turning every aspect of your playtime into an ongoing challenge against the world, and *Driveclub* is the logical progression of this. As well as real-time collaboration between drivers to get communal upgrades, vehicles and bragging rights, feats on each course are tracked globally to try and find the best drifters, speedsters and overtakers on top of simply who can turn in the best overall times. It's simple asynchronous competition but again, it's a more connected kind of gaming and something we're going to be seeing a lot more of in the future.

In fact, we already are. *Destiny* is another perfect example of this, bringing together players of all levels whatever they're doing, and while it's not an MMO in the purest sense, most of its mechanics are pulled directly from the genre. Multiplayer high-level raids, timed events, leveling beyond the cap through gear, faction standing and currency... it might look and indeed play like an FPS but *Destiny* has MMO DNA running through every aspect of it. That's potentially why it seems to have divided players into one camp that absolutely love it and another that simply don't get on with it. It's a grind, but that's what it's designed to be, silly.



△○×□ Many modern games show design choices clearly inspired by elements of MMO structure, despite not actually being MMOs themselves.



109
114 108
152
124
113 LEVEL UP

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120
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167
CRITICAL

GAME CHANGER: WORLD OF WARCRAFT



There are several games that can claim to have created and defined the MMO experience, but only one of those games managed to permeate popular culture to the point where it had an eight-digit paying subscriber base and an episode of *South Park* devoted to it. Blizzard's online RPG is what most people will think of when they hear the term 'MMO' and that's a fair connection to make – in terms of settings, characters and mechanics, it's about as typical an example of the MMORPG as it would be possible to name. With so many shortcuts, hotkeys and different ability triggers, it's no wonder that people said it could never work on console but after the strides made by clever features like *FFXIV*'s Cross Hotbar, it's no longer outside the realms of possibility.

While the bubble has far from burst for Blizzard on this decade-old game (it just got a new expansion), the current player base is close to half what it was at its peak – it's probably a little late in the day to call for a PS4 port. But we'd be amazed if Blizzard wasn't planning something for a console release somewhere down the line...



△○×□ Can *The Elder Scrolls Online* survive the delay? And will we even see it this side of 2015? We'll find out soon...

Anyone disappointed by the perceived lack of content would do well to look at something like *World Of Warcraft*, which still has millions of active players a decade after release despite only a handful of full expansions. It has been kept alive by incremental updates and improvements to its endgame, and that's exactly what Bungie clearly plans to do with *Destiny* – it's a far more organic and cost-effective way of retaining a player base than the popular 'annual update' model and if Bungie can come good

from MMOs, the traditional MMO is in turn looking to the biggest games in order to keep its own genre ahead of the curve. *The Elder Scrolls Online*, for instance, offers the same first-person perspective as *Oblivion* and *Skyrim* for anyone bold enough to use it in a way more technical environment, while *EverQuest Next* may have watched the odd *Minecraft* Let's Play on YouTube – its voxel-based world is clearly inspired by the indie sensation, but with miniature

"SOMETHING NEEDS TO CHANGE IN ORDER TO FIGHT THE DIMINISHING RETURNS OF THE ANNUAL MODEL"

with regular updates and additions, it could mark a turning point for an industry that currently loves to turn out new versions of the same stuff on a yearly basis. Something needs to change in order to fight the diminishing returns of the annual model, and by looking to the MMO for inspiration, it could be that Bungie has already sparked something with *Destiny*.

It's a two-way process, though, and while mainstream games might be borrowing a few ideas

cubes allowing for intricate design work that you don't have to be practically in orbit to appreciate. It'll be rewarding creators as well, with structures and items built by players put up for sale in some kind of *LittleBigPlanet* car boot sale. This new structure means that landscapes can also be deformed by attacks and spells, while just like in *Minecraft* you'll be able to tunnel down into the ground in search of loot rather than simply farming at bespoke resource nodes.

PS3 INSPIRATION



INVADERS MUST DIE

Despite other players not always being visible during From Software's *Souls* games, that doesn't make them any less dangerous. The invasion system is an evolution of traditional MMO PvP experiences and one that a lot of developers seem to be taking inspiration from.



HERO QUEST

It's long been said that MMOs simply don't work on consoles, but games like *DC Universe Online* and *Final Fantasy XI* disprove that myth. Now, there seems to be a greater confidence in developers entering the console MMO space as a result, and they keep getting better.



MAG RUNNER

While it's not strictly an MMO, *MAG*'s insane 256-player cap for each match dwarfs every other shooter on PS3. It's this kind of scale that is being built upon by things like *PlanetSide 2*, and that player count seems massive to us, whether it fits the traditional definition or not...

ΔΟΧΔ *Destiny's* endgame is lifted straight out of an MMO – it's a grind for the best gear, but you'll love every damn second of it.



Little by little, whether you know it or not, you're being exposed to more and more MMO elements with each major new release that comes along. So when the time comes that a new MMO hits and you fancy playing it, you'll be way better equipped to deal with its inevitable daunting walls of facts and figures than the last generation of gamers were – going into a game like *EVE Online* blind was about as easy as actually building your own spaceship from scratch, for instance, before other games drip-fed us simplified versions of common MMO concepts until we were just about ready to take on one of the most complex games ever made. MMOs aren't as scary as they once were, people. And better still, a lot of them have gone free-to-play, so you can find out whether you get on with them or not for yourself. The more, the merrier, as they say, and you'll not find a better chance to play with the whole world at once than you will in a good old MMO.



TOP TEN COMPANION CHARACTERS

WHEN THEY CONSISTENTLY GET IN YOUR WAY, CONSPIRE TO GET YOU KILLED, OR MAKE YOU CRINGE BY CONSTANTLY REPEATING THE SAME PHRASE OVER AND OVER AGAIN, COMPANION CHARACTERS CAN BE MADDENING. DONE RIGHT, THOUGH, COMPANIONS CAN BE THE HOOK THAT PULLS YOU INTO A GAME'S WORLD, JUST LIKE THIS LOT...



ASHLEY GRAHAM

ESCORT MISSIONS ARE almost always horrific. The fact that escorting Ashley through *Resident Evil 4*'s dangerous, freak-infested world doesn't elicit those trademark frustrations is not insignificant. Sure, she's not the best 'character' on our list, but when you've played as many terrible escort missions as we have, having a companion that – to give one example – has the good sense to duck when they're in your crosshairs, is a godsend.



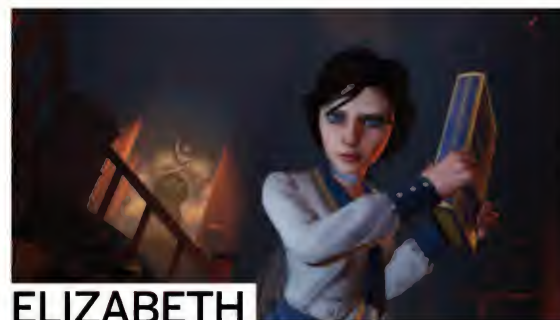
CAPTAIN PRICE

WHAT IS IT that makes *Call Of Duty 4: Modern Warfare*'s Captain Price such a great character? Perhaps it's his gruff, no-nonsense demeanor, his maverick attitude, the sense that he's seen it all, or the finest moustache in videogames. Whatever it is (it's the moustache), Captain Price is a man that you'd follow to the end. His aura is only enhanced when you step into his shoes in *All Ghilled Up* – perhaps the most iconic mission in the series.



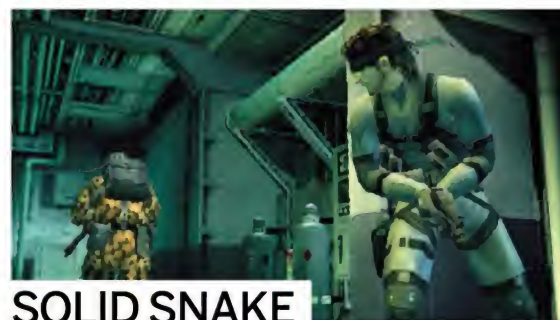
YORDA

WHEN YOU'RE TALKING about great companion characters, it's impossible to overlook *Ico*'s Yorda. *Ico* isn't just a game that happens to have a companion character, it's a game that's built around that very concept, a game in which the relationship between the player and Yorda is fundamental. The 'boy saves girl' formula is unquestionably a tired one, but there's a soul to this game that means it just about gets away with it.



ELIZABETH

THERE'S AN ARGUMENT that she's too often a tool used to tell Booker's story, but that doesn't change the fact that *Infinitesimal*'s Elizabeth is a likeable, well-drawn character that you'll miss when absent. Elizabeth becomes a little anonymous during combat, but we'd take that over a companion that has to be babysat, lest they constantly get themselves killed. When she throws a health pack your way, you'll be glad that she's got your back.



SOLID SNAKE

WE'RE NOT LOSING our minds; Solid Snake was a companion character. In *Metal Gear Solid 2*, Snake disguises himself as Iroquois Pliskin, saving Raiden from Vamp before offering him help and advice via Codec. If the realisation that Pliskin is THE Solid Snake isn't enough for you, how about the experience of battling through Arsenal Gear with the legend at your side, cleaning house like the veteran that he is? He's pretty good...



POTATO GLADOS

NOT CONTENT WITH just being one of the great videogame villains, GLaDOS also stakes a claim as one of the best companion characters for her role in *Portal 2*. After being usurped by Wheatley and ending up strapped to a potato, GLaDOS forms an unlikely alliance with the player. Her dry brand of humour, backhanded putdowns and the odd slow-clap win her a place in our list by virtue of the fact that she makes us laugh.



ALYX VANCE

FROM A COMPANION character that needs to be carefully watched, to one who is perfectly capable of looking after herself – *Half-Life 2*'s Alyx Vance. In fact, Alyx isn't only able to watch her own hide; she's frequently to be found saving Gordon Freeman's skin, too. That's what's great about Alyx – she's tough and intelligent. We're always glad to have her fighting by our side when we're surrounded by headcrabs and zombies, though Alyx isn't just a great fighter. She's a companion with personality, one that feels like a real person that exists outside her relationship with the protagonist – a compliment that can be paid to too few videogame characters.



GARRUS VAKARIAN

OF ALL THE characters that the player can recruit in the *Mass Effect* series, it's Garrus who seems to be most universally loved. How can you not like the guy? He's got principles and he'll do what ever it takes to stick to them, even if it means self-sacrifice. As a companion, he's loyal, someone you can trust to get the job done, someone that always shows the utmost commitment. As a character, he's what the kids call a 'cool cucumber', though, at the same time, he's not someone you'd want to anger. In battle, he's powerful and fearless. In short, Garrus is bloody brilliant, and every *Mass Effect* player's best friend.



DOGMEAT

DON'T YOU DARE suggest that Dogmeat doesn't deserve his position on this list because he is 'just a dog'. Okay, so you can't have a conversation with him, but that doesn't prevent people forming strong relationships with their four-legged friends in this terrible place called 'reality'. Dogmeat provides company on those long treks across *Fallout 3*'s wasteland, will throw himself into combat without hesitation and will even head off to scavenge items for his master. Perhaps the main reason he's one of the greatest companions on this list is that if he dies, Dogmeat's gone for good. You'll do everything you can to make sure that doesn't happen.



ELLIE

HANDS DOWN THE best companion character is *The Last Of Us*'s Ellie. From a mechanical perspective, Ellie doesn't screw things up for the player in combat and will provide the occasional assist. Naughty Dog has a knack for creating believable characters, whether that be through great dialogue, a small character flourish, an understanding of when things are best left unsaid, or in this case, a combination of all of the above. Ellie is as you'd imagine a teenage girl who'd been forced to survive in a brutal world and there's real tragedy drawn from her disconnection to pre-apocalypse American culture, her longing to live a life that she barely understands.

INDIE EXPLOSION

From the exhilarating to the mysterious, the quiet to the cacophonous, these are the some of the best indie games coming to PlayStation...



THE VANISHING OF ETHAN CARTER

FORMAT: PS4 **ETA:** Q1 2015

Founded by three ex-People Can Fly developers, The Astronauts is a studio preparing to unleash its first title, *The Vanishing Of Ethan Carter*. "Inspired by the weird fiction stories and other tales of macabre of the early 20th Century," to use the developer's own words, the game is a horror-infused mystery title starring a detective who has the ability to visualise murders at the scene of a crime. We love a good bit of detective work, so we're looking forward to finding out precisely where that pesky Ethan has vanished to.



HOTLINE MIAMI 2: WRONG NUMBER

FORMAT: PS4, PS3 & VITA **ETA:** Q4 2014

To say *Hotline Miami 2*'s been set a high bar would be something of an understatement, given that its predecessor is one of the best games released in recent years. Even if it can't quite match the first game, though, we still want more of the drug that *Hotline Miami*'s peddling – that heady mix of fast-paced action, neon-soaked visuals, hallucinogenic storytelling and a wonderful, transcendent electronic soundtrack. If this game is anywhere near as good as its progenitor, it will be absolutely essential.



THE WITNESS

FORMAT: PS4
ETA: Q4 2014

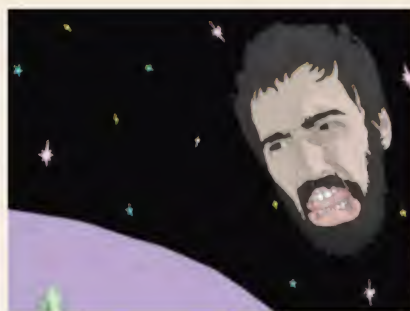
Jonathan Blow's been careful not to give too much away about *The Witness*, but given that he's at the helm of developer Thekla, we're on board. What we do know is that you will be given free reign to explore a beautiful island, solving puzzles as you do so. Blow's talked about how the puzzles in the game are intended to nurture a spark of realisation in your mind and hinted that the puzzles might tell the player more than they realise – sounds interesting. Thekla's Orsi Spanyol recently revealed that the team is in "finish-the-game mode" so we reckon we'll get to play it this year.



EVERYBODY'S GONE TO THE RAPTURE

FORMAT: PS4
ETA: Q1 2015

What exactly is *Everybody's Gone to the Rapture*? Well, we don't really know and that's a large part of the appeal. What we can say is that the game looks incredible from a graphical standpoint and that, given developers The Chinese Room's past form, the game will likely have a strong focus on exploration and narrative. On that front, we know that the game is set in the wake of an apocalypse, hence the title. As to what happens after that, who knows? Puzzle solving? Pure exploration? We're quite happy to leave that aura of mystery intact until we get to play it ourselves.



ONE WAY TRIP

FORMAT: PS4, VITA
ETA: Q4 2014

Hands down the most bizarre game on its way to PlayStation has to be *One Way Trip*. The set-up is that you, your brother and a significant portion of your countrymen have been poisoned by a tainted water supply, leaving you constantly hallucinating and with six hours to live. You'll get to decide how you spend those remaining hours and what you'll aim to achieve while tripping balls and dying. The game's developer says that the story mode will adapt to choices that you make and the relationships that you form in the game in a *Walking Dead*-like fashion. Colour us intrigued.



NOT A HERO

FORMAT: PS4, VITA
ETA: Q1 2015

The next game from Roll7, the team behind *OlliOlli*, is looking pretty cool. *Not A Hero* reminds us of a fast-paced *Elevator Action* with cover mechanics chucked into the equation. You'll have to quickly jump in and out of cover, timing your attacks against enemy forces that will be doing the same as they try to take you down. The game will have a variety of characters with different special abilities, but Roll7 has suggested that there's an element of minimalism to its mechanics, along with a reliance on a sense of flow, that means it has more in common with *OlliOlli* than you might think.

"IT LOOKS TO BE IMAGINATIVE, MEDITATIVE AND ATMOSPHERIC"



NIGHT IN THE WOODS

FORMAT: PS4
ETA: Q2 2015

Just look at it. *Night In The Woods* is an aesthetic delight, backed up, if the trailer is anything to go by, with a great soundtrack. We're very happy indeed that the game's Kickstarter campaign was a success and that we'll get to play it on PS4. This adventure game, populated by a cast of animals, looks to be imaginative, meditative and atmospheric. The game tells the story of college dropout Mae, who returns to her dead-end hometown to be greeted by the disconcerting realisation that the town and her friends aren't quite as she remembers them. There's also something lurking in the woods...



FLAME OVER

FORMAT: VITA **ETA:** Q4 2014

Looking like a great fit for the Vita's touchscreen, *Flame Over* is a game where you get to do a turn as a little cartoon fireman doing what firemen do – putting out fires and saving cats. Levels in *Flame Over* are procedurally generated, based on four themes, so this should provide a nice bit of variety. Given the game's procedurally generated nature, we reckon it sounds like it would be a good fit for a *Spelunky*-like daily challenge where every player takes on a set level each day. That means we'll also be hoping for leaderboards so that we can see if we've managed to best our friend's scores. By putting out fire.

VOLUME

FORMAT: PS4, VITA **ETA:** Q1 2015

The next game from the creator of *Thomas Was Alone* is *Volume*, a stealth game that retells the myth of Robin Hood for the internet age. Danny Wallace, who narrated *Thomas Was Alone*, will be returning to provide more voice work for the game and he'll be joined by Charlie McDonnell. As the name suggests, sound will be an important factor in *Volume*, both in terms of avoiding your enemies and as a way to manipulate them. Perhaps the most interesting thing about the game, though, is that players will be handed the tools to remould the game's levels in any way they see fit. We're intrigued to see exactly how that will work. Also, *Volume* is inspired by *Metal Gear Solid 2* – we like that.



"VOLUME IS INSPIRED BY METAL GEAR SOLID 2 – WE LIKE THAT"



LOADING HUMAN

FORMAT: PS4 **ETA:** Q4 2015

The only game on our list that supports Project Morpheus, *Loading Human* aims to merge classic adventure game mechanics with virtual reality. The game was originally being developed as a PC title that would make use of Oculus Rift, but it's now making its way to PS4 as well. It'll also give you an excuse to dust off your Move controllers – the game intends to combine VR and motion control to allow you to play the game with natural movements, the idea being that this will aid immersion. *Loading Human* is set in the 22nd century and sees the player attempting to repair a device that slows the ageing process at the behest of their father.



DREAMFALL CHAPTERS: THE LONGEST JOURNEY

FORMAT: PS4 **ETA:** Q4 2014

Dreamfall Chapters is the third game in *The Longest Journey* series and sees the return of Zoe Castillo as its protagonist. For those not familiar with the series, *Dreamfall Chapters* is an adventure game that takes place in two parallel dimensions – Stark presents a dystopian cyberpunk future and its counterpart, Arcadia, a realm of magic and fantasy. *Dreamfall Chapters* is going to be released episodically with choices that the player makes effecting how the story will play out over the course of those episodes.



HEART FORTH, ALICIA

FORMAT: PS4, VITA **ETA:** Q2 2015

It's not only its wonderful 16-bit art style that makes Kickstarter success *Heart Forth, Alicia* something of an ode to the Nineties. From a gameplay perspective, too, this game aims to capture the adventurous spirit of the likes of *Castlevania: Symphony Of The Night* and *The Legend Of Zelda*. The game follows a

Metroidvania structure in that players will have to gain specific abilities in order to progress and will encompass puzzle solving, platforming and combat. There's also a raft of RPG mechanics including a crafting system, upgradable abilities, sidequests to complete and loot to be discovered across the game's world.

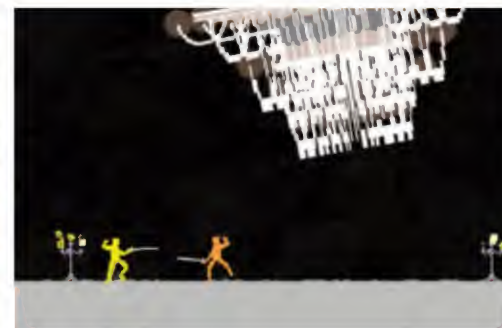


THE TALOS PRINCIPLE

FORMAT: PS4 **ETA:** Q4 2015

Something of a departure for the team behind *Serious Sam*, *The Talos Principle* bills itself as a philosophical puzzle game. The team behind the game says it is going for a Philip K Dick sci-fi vibe, with the game placing you in control of a robot

body as you're bossed about by an omnipresent, disembodied voice. Despite its philosophical bent, Croteam says it won't force any of that stuff on you – if you'd rather just get on with solving the puzzles, you'll be free to do so.



NIDHOGG

FORMAT: PS4 **ETA:** Q3 2014

There have already been some great multiplayer indie games on PS4 and the console's about to get another one in the form of *Nidhogg*. The back and forth nature of this fencing game will draw laughter, screams and whoops of joy from you and your friends as you alternately gain and lose ground. The objective? Push your opponent back through a series of screens until you get to the end, where you'll have the honour of being eaten by a giant worm. Having played it on PC, we can tell you that it's a game that's best played with a controller, so its going to find itself right at home on PS4.


THE HOUSE OF HELGHAST

Guerrilla Games talks mistakes, meeting expectations and the pressures of launching a new console generation



△OX□ For once, we didn't have to ask ourselves if we were at the right place.





“WITH KILLZONE 2, WE SET OURSELVES
A RIDICULOUS BENCHMARK WITH A
CERTAIN TRAILER...”

If ever there were a game that embodied the struggles of a launch title, it was *Killzone Shadow Fall*. Barring a few (mainly cross-generational) successes, the first year of the PS4 has been fairly lacklustre. Almost a year after launch, triple-A titles that helped sell the console at E3s past continue to slip from 2014 into the swirling, non-committal time-clouds of next year. On the other side of the great divide, the Xbox One has a similar problem. For all the talk of the PS4's new architecture being easier to work than its predecessor, early adopters still haven't been rewarded with much to actually play.

But whinge as we might now, the situation at launch was even worse. Both *Watch Dogs* and Sony's exclusive *Driveclub* missed their day one release dates – the former surfacing six months later, the latter still lurking in its development netherworld. Of the remaining day one PS4 releases, only two were next-gen, Sony exclusives. And *Knack* wasn't very good. That left one reason, and one reason only, to buy a PS4 on the day of its launch. *Killzone Shadow Fall* was carrying the weight of a whole new generation on its shoulders. Fortunately, it turned out to be pretty good.

“Every game has a different challenge to it,” says *Shadow Fall*'s creative director, Steven Ter Heide. “With *Killzone 2* we set ourselves

a ridiculous benchmark with a certain trailer; with *Killzone 3* we integrated Move, we integrated 3D, and we had a very short development cycle. [With] *Shadow Fall* it was a launch title. That was new for us.”

Guerrilla Games was working to a tight schedule. When *Driveclub* skidded badly past its release date, it was imperative that *Shadow Fall* filled the void. Coupled with the learning curve presented by the PS4's more powerful hardware, even the developers admit that getting the finished product onto shelves (and more importantly, into launch day hardware bundles) required them to make compromises.

“[We sacrificed] lots of things,” says Heide. “The first couple of months [of development] it's like ‘the sky's the limit’ [and] ‘yay, look at all the memory we have’. Then a few months later you're saying ‘hmm, why are we [using] so much memory?’ You run into new boundaries, and that's a very exciting time because creatively you can do a lot of things. But at the same time you know that deadline is there – you're committed, you know you have to be there to support the launch. That is always something that's in the back of your [mind].”

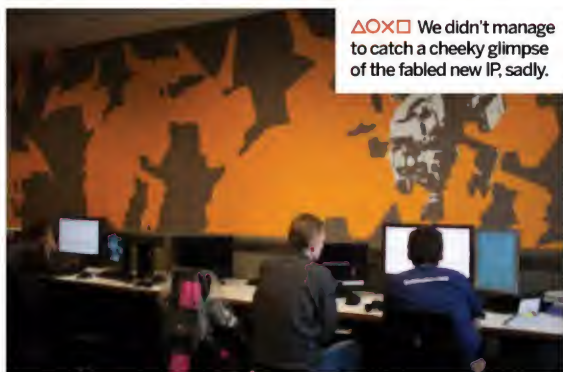
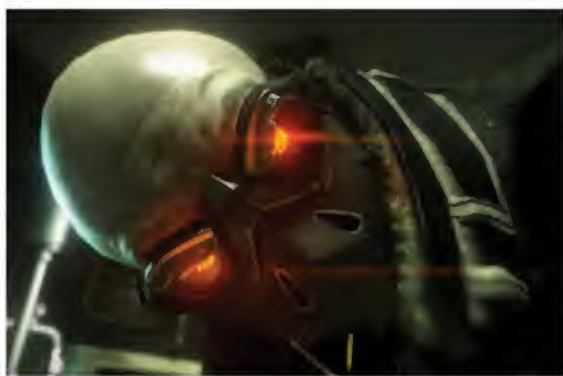
While *Shadow Fall* was well received on launch – with a Metascore of 73 it was comfortably the highlight of the new generation – Heide is candid about those dual

pressures of time and new hardware seeping into the game's groundwater.

“[You] try at the time to make the best choices you can, [but] looking back at the game, certainly there are things we could have done better,” he says. “The type of gameplay that we wanted to offer is there for a lot of the time, but not all the time. We could have done a better job [with the consistency] and cut the bits that didn't match the vision.”

Heide gives an example of the problem from early in *Shadow Fall*'s single-player story that exemplifies the game's occasional mish-mash of direction. “We had a very open [area] in the first level of the campaign, [but the next] was corridors and a different type of gameplay. It didn't build on what people had just learned. It was [something] we could have done better, absolutely – but trying to find the right balance and [make] the right decisions at the time [on] a launch title is a very tricky thing.”

Being a Sony flagship carries more responsibilities than just cracking the two nuts of looking prettier (to justify the new hardware) and playing better (to justify the sequel). Perversely, being painted as the poster child for a new console also means diverting more time away from development than competing studios. Why? Because when you're the one meant to convince millions of gamers to part



ΔOX□ We didn't manage to catch a cheeky glimpse of the fabled new IP, sadly.



ΔOX□ We're not sure how we'd cope with this guy watching us all day.

with cash for largely unproven hardware, you need to make the rounds. And every day you spend debugging a demo build for an expo or giving press interviews is another day that you're not in the studio, polishing the actual product.

"You have all these commitments," says Heide. "You have events where you have to show live gameplay, you have to be at E3 and all those events to show what the game will be like and that's a distraction. Ultimately, it's always distracting to do things that don't result in the final game. I would absolutely do it again, but at the same time I would be much stricter [with regard to] what we should really be doing."

The second problem was the question of how *Shadow Fall* would be sold. In the run-up to the PS4's release, it was revealed that Sony had been flirting with the idea of ditching physical media altogether and switching over entirely to PSN downloads. Obviously – thankfully



GAMING'S PRETTIEST ASHTRAY

Pushing the PS4 hardware to the limit (accidentally)

What happens when you give your development team access to cutting edge gaming hardware and let them do their own thing? Turns out, they sometimes go a bit overboard.

"It's a very ambitious and passionate studio," Heide says on the subject of Guerrilla's work ethic. "You need to be. You're living with these games for years and you really need to like games to make them. Everyone shares that drive to go after the next big thing and that's the overriding attitude when stepping through these doors – everyone will be passionate talking about the one little thing that they're working on. 'This is the best lamppost ever' [that sort of

thing]. It's that insane attention to detail that you have to rein in a little bit. [You have to say], 'that lamppost is not the most important thing in the game. *You* might want to focus on it for another week, but probably not a good idea.'"

"Another example," says Bak. "At one point we had the highest resolution ashtray ever made. It had all the new lighting models and specular [reflections] and normal and texture resolutions – [everything] through the roof. It took up a sizeable portion of the memory alone. It's just a tiny thing... but that's how passionate people get working here."

– that never happened. But the question of how to keep fans playing *Shadow Fall* using digital incentives after the game's relatively uncontested launch window was on the team's mind – and is still a formula they say is in need of perfecting.

"There's still a lot for us to learn," Heide says. "We have to find the right mix in terms of 'what is the right business model for people?' and 'how do they want to consume this content?' There's a whole host of business models out there, with free-to-play and subscriptions. I don't know whether the right one is there yet. I think everyone is experimenting, and then you can see negatives and positives from all [sides].

difficult to quantify. For us it's about trying to figure out if we can make a good case for 'if we sell the game like this, people will really be into it.'"

But the online nature of the PS4 has had a major upside for the *Shadow Fall* team: it makes analysing what players are doing – and, by extension, what keeps them playing – easier than ever before. In the ten months since the game launched, the team at Guerrilla has been using a mixture of pinpoint telemetry and written feedback from its players to both tinker with the game as it exists in the moment and plan its future growth.

"When we release a game people start playing it and it basically becomes their game," says Arjan

"WE'RE VERY AMBITIOUS AND DRIVEN, AND YOU NEED TO BE IF YOU WANT TO BE IN THE INDUSTRY"

"Right now the community is loving the fact that we're giving them so much support – but, hey, people love free stuff, right?"

Heide asks, rhetorically, referencing the decision to release new *Shadow Fall* multiplayer maps to players for free, instead of distributing them as paid DLC. "That works, but at the same time it's really difficult to measure the success of it.

We fully suspect that the free maps have an impact on people not returning the game – people hanging onto the game because there's free content coming – [but] it's

Bak, *Shadow Fall*'s lead designer. "They provide feedback – we created a forum for them to do this – and we're constantly looking at what we should do next.

"Elements of the season pass had to be more or less defined [before release] – there's going to be co-op, there's going to be two multiplayer expansions [etc]. But otherwise we're open in terms of where the community wants us to take the game. One thing that we are noticing, however, is that whatever they're asking for, we can never deliver it fast enough. When they say 'oh, it'd be great to have this!' [we say] 'well, that's going to take some time'. But even 'some time'

A HISTORY OF VIOLENCE

The five jackbooted steps that led Guerrilla Games to *Killzone Shadow Fall*

1. KILLZONE (2004)

The original '*Halo* killer', whatever the developers might say today. *Killzone* was a hard sci-fi slap in the face – a first-person shooter that was at once gorgeous (in a horrid, oppressive sort of way) and a refreshing change. It really put the PS2 hardware to work.

2. KILLZONE LIBERATION (2006)

The franchise's first jump off consoles and into your pocket, *Liberation* differed from its 2004 forbear in two novel ways. First, it toned down the violence, and second the game's action played out in third-person. A quirky experiment, never repeated.



3. KILLZONE 2 (2009)

The best-received instalment in the franchise, *Killzone 2* found itself bobbing in hot water after an E3 2005 trailer that – ahem – may have promised more than the PS3 hardware was able to deliver. Fortunately, the game was a corker.

4. KILLZONE 3 (2011)

A solid sequel that swapped grey-brown grime for snow (on top of grey-brown grime), *Killzone*'s third instalment tried to rub its magic off onto the PS3's Move controller – leaving only a sticky peripheral smudge that most players ignored.

5. KILLZONE: MERCENARY (2013)

One of the first and last big-name titles for the Vita, *Mercenary* was one of the few titles released for Sony's handheld that proved PS3-style FPS games could be just as fun to play on the bus as in your front room... whatever *Black Ops: Declassified* had to say about it.

AOX Whatever you might think of the games, the enemy design in *Killzone* is exceptional.

in their heads doesn't equate to three months of development – they think it will be next week."

"It's like using Kickstarter," Heide agrees. "For some people it's a huge amount of pressure and stress. You [effectively] have a whole bunch of shareholders, rather than having a single creative voice. All of these people want some control. We're sort of doing that [by listening to feedback], but at the same time we're struggling to get the message across and convey to people the intricacies of, for example, implementing a new control scheme. Do we really want everyone to be a game designer? Is that going to make it better?"

With most of the work now completed on *Shadow Fall*, the next challenge will be juggling *Killzone* and Guerrilla's mysterious new IP – rumoured to be an RPG – and living up to the PlayStation community's massive expectations.

"Becoming a multi-project studio is a challenge in itself," says Heide. "You have to be sensitive to the needs of other projects. We're very ambitious and driven – and you need to be if you want to be in the industry – but for us it's more [a case of meeting our own standards]."

"Ever since [the original] *Killzone*, people have been saying we're the *Halo* killers," he continues. "We're not the *Halo* killers – we're just making a shooter that happens to launch around the same window as *Halo*. It's the same with *Killzone 2* being compared to all of these military shooters like *Call Of Duty*. We've not sought that out, we've made the games we wanted to make and do the best we can. It's awesome because we feel we're still a young studio with a lot to learn, yet we're being compared to *COD* and these humongous studios with track records that go way, way back. We're not there yet; we're not even in the same league. There's so much more ladder to climb. We know that we can do better and we need to do better and that's what drives us: knowing we can absolutely get there."

AOX Guerrilla's office is positively overrun with Helghast.

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"WE CAN'T WAIT TO SEE WHAT NEW PARTS OF EACH PLANET ARE AVAILABLE TO EXPLORE THIS TIME NEXT YEAR"

Destiny

Get your ass to Mars



DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Activision

DEVELOPER
Bungie

PRICE
£54.99

PLAYERS
1-16

AGE RATING
16+

INSTALL SIZE
21 GB

TWITTER
@Bungie

Trophies 42



ALSO ON PS3

REVIEWING A GAME like *Destiny* so soon after launch feels a little like reviewing a movie based on its opening scene, or a book from its first couple of pages. Pretty much all of the reviews that went live during launch week complained about a lack of content, seemingly oblivious to the daily, weekly and monthly timed events that will continue to expand the game's universe for the foreseeable future. And while we agree that there isn't a huge amount there in terms of day-one content, to ignore the bigger picture is to do Bungie a massive disservice and to miss the point of *Destiny* on a fundamental level.

That, right there, is one of the main hurdles *Destiny* has encountered, though. Drawing influence as it does from all kinds of genres, anyone comparing it to existing, purer examples of each of those genres will invariably find problems with it. It's not a standard FPS – you can pretty much play through the Story missions and pretend it is, but you'll still need

to be upgrading your gear and most likely grinding a little bit to stay in line with the difficulty curve, plus elements of online play creep in here. It's not a traditional competitive shooter, either – class abilities unbalance each mode in some way or another and you can't even get into the Crucible before your character has all of their basic powers at level 5. It's not an RPG – there's a skill tree and stats, sure, but character builds are based predominantly on perks and buffs that come from gear, not the character itself. And it's certainly not an MMO, although elements of MMO design inform much of the fundamental design of the game. It's not even a particularly strong social game, with the Tower limited to just 16 players at a time and a rudimentary set of emotes all you have with which to communicate. One of those is the now-legendary 'dance button', mind, so we'll let it off. There's nothing quite like a spontaneous dance-off as your team captures a point in Control, after all.

Judge *Destiny* by existing standards, then, and yes, you're likely to be

disappointed. This is a game that requires a fresh perspective and deserves to be appreciated on its own merits, and these are plentiful. It's absolutely stunning for the most part, a visual step up from even the glorious vistas of the beta especially once you reach the later areas, such as the lush jungles of Venus or the dusty rolling plains of the Red Planet. Gunplay is every bit as tight as you'd expect from the studio that practically defined the console FPS with *Halo*, although those who never really got on with Master Chief will probably find a lot of the same things to complain about in *Destiny* – a relatively slow pace, the floaty jumping, a fairly limited arsenal and meaty melee blows. There's no denying that it sure does feel a lot like *Halo*, but that's certainly no bad thing.

Always-online is a contentious issue but having witnessed some of the most amazing non-scripted moments of our gaming lives because of it, it does seem justified. You can take a three-person Fireteam into any of the game's missions but other players



SECOND SCREEN

Your Guardian on your phone

CHECK!

You're free to view your current equipment to see how your arsenal could be improved, wherever you are and whatever you're up to.

READ!

The lore is really awesome, but the game chronically undersells it. Be sure to check out your Grimoire cards here, or on Bungie's site.

BRAG!

Stats for all your recent activities are tracked here. If you smashed some mates in PvP, be sure to rub it in their faces.

LEARN!

Updates keep you abreast of all the latest goings-on, from additions and updates to timed modes and features you won't want to miss.



are likely to be exploring the same map at the same time. Should your paths cross, you're free to help each other out or just go about your business – this is where those awesome moments we mentioned come from. Whether it's a lone hero sweeping in to pull enemy fire while your team gets back to its feet or a full allied Fireteam lending their guns when a boss battle looks like it has you beat, this all just helps *Destiny*'s world feel that much more alive. Merging game sessions like this can also have some unexpected consequences, turning areas that are usually quiet into hectic battlegrounds due to another team's Heroic or Epic mission modifier or even introducing foes you're not even ready to see yet – watch your step on Venus, as it's possible to stumble into the opening stages of the Vault Of Glass raid if you're not careful. And that won't end well for you.

We've seen a lot of complaints about the loot system too and while we get as furious as anyone else when the Cryptarch decides that the Legendary Engram you found should turn into a Rare (and usually one worse than what you already have equipped) rather than a Legendary or an Exotic, it's important to see this loot system as a supplement to the guaranteed methods to grab high-end gear rather than a standalone alternative. With weekly caps on the amount of Crucible and Vanguard Marks you can earn and a special vendor who only appears at weekends, progression in this way is controlled so that it would take several weeks at best to fully kit out your Guardian in Legendary and Exotic gear. Lucky drops can speed this along but outside of the hardcore warriors who raced their way through the game to reach the end-game Raid as soon as it launched, the system is designed to make you take your time. It's not hard to reach the Mark caps in the space of a week before the counter resets, so just take your time – you're going to need all the experience you can get before you even try and conquer the Nightfall Strikes and the Vault Of Glass anyway. Grind and farm all you like (we certainly do) but just remember that there are easy, sure-fire ways to get the gear you need in the end.



“A GAME THAT REQUIRES A FRESH PERSPECTIVE AND DESERVES TO BE APPRECIATED ON ITS OWN MERITS, AND THESE ARE PLENTIFUL”

Right now, *Destiny* is effectively four large play spaces (one each on Earth, the moon, Venus and Mars) and the social Tower area. While these are all large, missions and Strikes often cover the same ground – for a game that promises a universe, it doesn't feel like you have that much grounds to explore each planet, but this is clearly an area that will expand in the coming months and years. There's a PvP map on Mercury, for instance – a setting not visited in solo or co-op content – while one location, The Reef, only has a single cutscene in it right now, and it clearly wouldn't be given its own spot on the map if there weren't more to come in additional content and timed seasonal events. Each planet is likely to grow in this way over time, so we can't wait to see what new parts of each planet are available to explore this time next year, and beyond.

In the meantime, you've got three classes to develop to the soft level cap of 20, each with a pair of sub-classes that radically change how they play. Interestingly, these sub-classes appear as white (common) loot on your character profile in the companion app – will we see Bungie add Rare and



△×□ Find a spot where enemies respawn quickly and you can easily farm for loot.





Legendary roles to really shake things up? While experience stops adding to your level at 20, it's still important beyond that point. XP is also required to advance your gear for additional perks and defence, while character experience is still tracked above the cap and rewarded at intervals with Motes Of Light, a late-game currency used to buy incredible new gear. Your level may stay at 20, but Light level is where the end-game is at. Quality armour adds a new Light stat, with the total amount earning you levels above and beyond 20. There's still a cap at the moment (the best gear outside of Raid rewards can only get you as far as 29 currently, potentially 30 with that most elusive of loot) but as Bungie adds more and more impressive gear, that number is just going to keep rising.

The most exciting thing about *Destiny* isn't anything that is on the disc or the servers right now, but what it could, should and will become. Activision's half-billion investment in the brand shows that everyone involved is in it for the long haul and despite short-sighted issues with the amount of content currently available, it's just going to keep getting bigger – *DC Universe Online* was similarly lacking at launch but today, it's so packed with stuff to do as to be absolutely daunting. The foundations here are incredibly solid, from a story mode that, for all its faults (like the phoned-in performances of the all-star cast or the fact that the convoluted chain of events only involves a handful of characters) eases FPS players into this new connected universe, to the chunky shooter mechanics and crazily addictive cycle of earning and upgrading new gear only for the cycle to repeat when something better drops. The guys who raced through the game to be first in the world to clear the Raid? *They* needed to grind for gear. You don't. You can enjoy *Destiny* at your own pace, and watch the world grow around you, with timed events and rewards making playing in this way infinitely more enjoyable. If you're looking for a game to blast through, *Destiny* isn't it. If you're looking for something to commit to and invest in over the next year or more, though... welcome Guardian. You're one of us now. We'll see you in the Tower. We'll be the ones dancing. Wait... that probably doesn't help much. Oh well.

Luke Albigés



VERDICT

The basics are superb, visuals gorgeous and potential enormous – while there wasn't a huge amount of content at launch, we've already seen the world improve, and that's just going to keep on happening.

85%



POSTMORTEM

Jonty Barnes

Director of production, Bungie, Destiny

Has there been anything that players have done in *Destiny* that surprised you?

In terms of player behaviour, there were a few things that were very reassuring, a great tonic for the team. We didn't anticipate, as much as we wanted it to be true, that there'd be such an even spread of the class choices. We designed them that way but you never really know until you've got such a large audience – it was very even. That was one thing.

The enthusiasm of emotes is out of control – I found some great videos – but we made this stylistic choice of people think they want to chat but they actually don't as a default position. We don't want to spoil the tone and atmosphere of the story we're telling in our own environments in *Destiny*, so we made chat elective, going into the Fireteam. I think that has resulted in greater enthusiasm for emotes.

What are the plans in place for dealing with toxic community members? Similarly, will positive players be rewarded?

We can change things and reward people; we can change a lot of the variables. One of the things we did for the beta is created a forum that we had metrics on so we could see what people liked the most and what they'd asked for the most. I don't know if you've seen how much we've engaged our community historically... I don't think things like Forge for example would ever have existed in *Halo* if it wasn't for our relationship with the players out there and the community. I think when you look at the way that we are going to build upon the *Destiny* universe; the community is now a voice in that. They already changed some of our prioritisation in future work that we have planned.

What have the metrics shown with regards to people lone-wolfing it?

Actually this was pretty interesting – we found a lot of people spending time in the explore mode on their own. And even when they were in groups they often didn't stick together, they were like,

'well I'm going to get this part of it here, and you go get this part of it here'.

But here's the interesting thing: we do this tactical thing where we've got these crossing activities and we just drop stuff on you and go 'disruption – are you going to engage it?'. We found that way more than expected we were seeing people do those activities then join up in Fireteams and then going on to doing activities together because they'd had that collaboration and knew that the person they were playing with won't mess them around or weren't making it difficult for them. We actually found pretty much half of people who started off lone wolf ended up

“THINGS ARE MORE FUN WHEN PEOPLE ARE WATCHING YOU OR YOU'RE WITH YOUR FRIENDS”

in Fireteams. That was totally rewarding to see, because that was very much the intention – just under half.

Yeah – it never forces you. It does seem pretty organic.

That was the thing we wanted to accomplish for *Destiny* is really set the floor for people playing together. I think even if as human beings we're

not as forthright and wanting to be friends with everybody, things are actually more fun when people are watching you or you're with your friends. That was a big win.

Speaking of people watching and so on – are there plans to embrace integration with Twitch and other streaming outlets?

I think the thing that's happening for platforms now is that they provide a great layer for sharing and Twitch and social connection. Rather than have to invent our own, we're actually able to embrace what they're doing and we're actually informing what they're doing. I think you're going to see that as platforms become more mature and do lots more of that we're going to be jumping on that and taking full advantage.

I mean, there were some videos that went around where our cinematic team said 'oh my gosh, look what this community guy's done – it's actually challenging some of our marketing efforts'. There's some real talent out there, it's amazing what they can accomplish.

Did you see what happened with DeeJ [David Dague, community manager] when he went online in the beta? Every time he went to the Tower people just went and surrounded him and were trying to sit down and praise him like he was some kind of higher being in the world that is *Destiny*. So he can't play it and hide, he has to use a different gamer profile. But he loves it; it's great to interact in that way. People who recognise him just follow him everywhere when he's in the Tower. It's so good to see that.

Sci-fi is often said to be... not an unpopular genre, but not a particularly popular one. Yet *Destiny* had the most successful beta ever.

Yeah, I've never believed that comment. We actually wandered into fantasy with *Destiny* early on in our development and thought maybe we'd have dragons and go that way. We actually thought 'no, we're sci-fi people' – we love it, we've got great experience in it – but we





wanted to borrow some of that fantasy of what if technology's so advanced that we can explain away the magic of the warlock as being super-technology that allows you to do these plasma balls, or whatever it is. That's the way that we think of it, like a mythic sci-fi.

The popularity of the game is fed from the hype, and the hype comes from the ambition. You don't see many games with this level of ambition. Why?

I think there are a few ambitious games [and] ambitious developers out there. The thing is there aren't many who have the track record and trust and ability to actually gather that much investment for a new IP. We take it for granted sometimes, we each remind ourselves every day with a healthy dose of fear of 'you're only as good as the last game you create'.

I think we were very fortunate that early in the early discussions with Activision it was very obvious that they were a great partner who [was] equally ambitious. At the time the industry was looking at franchises getting stopped because they were high cost, low reward, the big titles were starting to exist and the economy was in a crash – we were like 'no, we're not going to spread ourselves across multiple projects – we're going to do one big thing as a studio and throw everything behind it, because that's going to get the best results'. Activision saw that and they were a great partner to match that level of ambition.



FIFA 15

Is EA still the ultimate team?



DETAILS

PUBLISHER
EA Sports

DEVELOPER
EA Canada

PSN PRICE
£59.99

PLAYERS
1-22

AGE RATING
3+

TWITTER
@EASPORTSFIFA

Trophies 46



ALSO ON PS3

FIFA IS A bit like Sky Sports. It revels in drama and spectacle, frames everything with hyperbole and slick presentation. It is a series that feels as if it's built to fulfil the fantasy of the epic Super Sunday clash, to deliver on the promise of the thrilling attacking contest that's not always matched in the real world.

That means that, as has always been the case with the series, *FIFA 15* has a certain character when it comes to the way it plays. That is not necessarily a good or bad thing, but simply means that it tends to lean towards a certain style of play, that it has a framework that seems to be constructed with the goal of creating end-to-end contests in mind. It is a game that tends to favour quick, sweeping counter-attacks rather than a more considered approach. That's not to say that it's not possible to go against the grain and try and play in a different style, nor that you'll never play a match that ends in a goalless draw. Rather, it is to say that it feels more natural to treat the midfield as a conduit to transition from defence to attack as quickly as

possible, rather than as a unit though which a game is controlled.

Consequently, while *FIFA 15* is a game that brilliantly captures the excitement of high-paced, high-intensity football, it can come up a little short in representing other aspects of the beautiful game. A match that's controlled using the intelligent, possession-based approach of a continental style; a scrappy, hard-

strength of the series over the last few years, but it's worth noting that there are tweaks that improve the experience. While fancy flicks and tricks are of course part of your arsenal, it's satisfying to find you can dribble successfully by paying careful attention to the positioning of your opponents and making intelligent use of changes of pace. The transition between sprinting and running feels

"ITS REALISM WILL PLEASE FANS, WITH ANIMATIONS MIMICKING ACTIONS YOU'LL SEE PLAYERS PERFORM ON A SATURDAY"

fought, physical game that's won after desperately clinging to an early goal scored in a messy goalmouth scramble – these are the kinds of things that are represented far less frequently in *FIFA* than they would be in your average week in football. While that lack of variety is regrettable, is it a big problem? No, because *FIFA* is still a lot of fun to play.

That *FIFA 15* is a very enjoyable football game will not come as a shock, given the

more natural, too, and physical tussles are pleasingly tactile. When it comes to improvements, EA has spent a good deal of time talking about changes they've made to goalkeepers in *FIFA 15*. We've still seen some buffoonish behaviour from the men between the sticks (and indeed, outfield players) but EA's claims aren't all bluster – in particular, we've noticed a greater urgency from goalkeepers that allows them to get up for shots that result



PS3 DIFFERENCES



PRO CLUBS

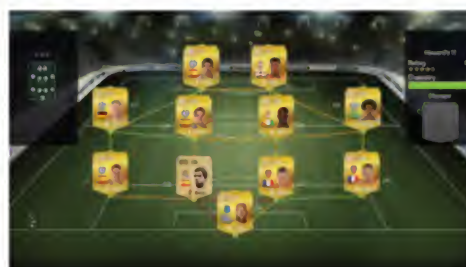
The 11-a-side online mode in which each player on the pitch is controlled by a real person is absent on PS3.

EMOTION

Players now have emotions if you're on PS4, apparently. It's not that big a deal, so don't cry for its absence on PS3.

PITCH DEGRADATION

Pitches will now show deformation as a game is played. That cosmetic touch won't be in the PS3 version.



from rebounds. We also have to say that *FIFA 15*'s ball physics are incredibly impressive, compensating for some of the lack of variety we mentioned earlier when it comes to the structure of the game by creating unique moments that arise from the ball's natural movement.

Indeed, *FIFA 15*'s level of realism will please fans of football immensely, with animations mimicking the actions you'll see players perform on a Saturday afternoon. That extends to the presentation, too – everything from the Premier League branded line-ups ahead of a game, to the authentic stadiums, to references made by the commentary team. All that stuff might seem silly to care about to someone who doesn't watch football (to a degree, it is) but to us fans, there's something undeniably pleasing about the way that *FIFA 15* replicates the match day experience.

We can't forgo mentioning what an excellent package *FIFA 15* is when it comes to ways to play – from career mode, to co-op seasons, to Ultimate Team. That's a large part of the appeal of *FIFA* – the fact that there are so many different ways to enjoy the game of football at its core, all of which are compelling in their own way. We'll have to wait and see if *FIFA 15* is the best football game released this year, but it sure as hell sets a high bar.

Paul Walker-Emig

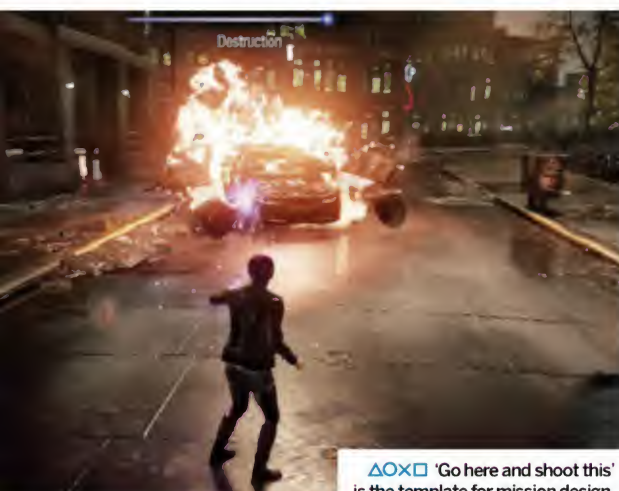
VERDICT

It's certainly not perfect, but *FIFA 15* is still an excellent, slickly presented football game that panders to football fans in every way possible and has found its feet on PlayStation 4.

85%

inFamous: First Light

In the cold light of day



DETAILS

PUBLISHER

Sony

DEVELOPER

Sucker Punch

PSN PRICE

£11.99

PLAYERS

1

INSTALL SIZE

9.3 GB

AGE RATING

16+

TWITTER

@SuckerPunchProd

Trophies 25



RARE ARE THOSE

examples of expansions that offer us something that even approaches a

departure from the main game to which they are attached. *inFamous*'s standalone expansion *First Light* certainly isn't a title that breaks that mould, but is that a bad thing? Should expansions not offer fans more of what they enjoyed in the main game? Or, should we complain that an opportunity to delight through surprise, to shake things up by experimenting with the game's core mechanics, has been missed? That depends on your perspective.

What we can say, though, is that in sticking closely to the template laid out in *Second Son*, *First Light* is a close reflection of its elder sibling; it's inherited the same good looks, but is also lumbered with the less desirable trait of being a little dense once you look past that. Consequently, the game is unlikely to make a believer out of anyone who didn't get on with *Second Son*. If what you're looking for is more of the same, though, then you're in luck.

Much of the attention that *Second Son* garnered was related to just how

spectacular the game looked, the way in which it showcased what the PS4 is capable of when it comes to visuals. As we've suggested, *First Light* looks just as good. In fact, with a more stable frame rate, it's perhaps even more impressive from a technical standpoint. However, the aesthetically sublime rendition of Seattle in which you'll be playing remains just as soulless as it was in its forebear. A veneer that's been carefully pieced together with dazzling particle effects, brilliant lighting and fastidiously detailed textures can only go so far in compensating for the lifeless world that's to be found underneath.

What about the narrative, then? If the place itself can't draw you in, can the story and characters compensate? Not really. We've got nothing against Fetch, the character whose story (pre-*Second Son*), is being told, but we just weren't engaged by her character, nor the small, poorly drawn cast that supports her. A rather predictable and uninspired plot does nothing to help in that respect.

Still, what most people seemed to enjoy about the main game wasn't the story, but dashing around Seattle, painting the sky

"IT'S INHERITED THE SAME GOOD LOOKS, BUT IS ALSO LUMBERED WITH THE LESS DESIRABLE TRAIT OF BEING A LITTLE DENSE"

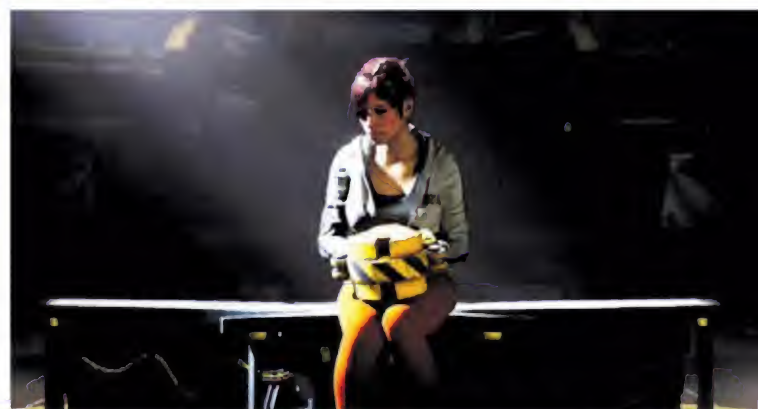




ΔOX□ Say what you like about *inFamous: First Light*, you can't deny that it looks bloody fantastic.



ΔOX□ Waving your controller about to paint neon graffiti isn't particularly enjoyable, but the end product is eye pleasing – *inFamous* in microcosm.



PLAY CHALLENGE



ΔOX□ Depending on which flavour of challenge you want to take, you could find yourself saving hostages or battling a horde of demons.

SHARE THESE FEATS, IF YOU CAN...



DIAMONDS ARE FOREVER

▲ **ETCH YOUR NAME** on *First Light*'s leaderboards with a 'Diamond' 500,000 point run on one of its challenges.



SNAP HAPPY

■ **SOME BEAUTIFUL PICTURES** were shared with *Second Son*'s photo mode. Dazzle us with a shot from *First Light*.

Beaten our trials? Let us know @PlayMag_UK!

with a neon trail while taking out enemies with an array of ostentatious superpowers, grabbing collectibles and seeking out the distractions offered by side-missions. You'll still be doing plenty of that in *First Light* and it remains enjoyable enough for what it is. While mission design regrettably continues to follow the 'go here and shoot this' formula a bit too closely, there are a couple of new mechanics introduced in some of the game's missions, so there's at least some variety added.

Speaking of variety, be aware that, playing as Fetch, you'll only have access to neon powers in this game, missing out on the other three that Delsin gained access to in *Second Son*. That's not going to be a problem for newcomers, but we can imagine that those veterans among you might feel frustrated at having some of your arsenal taken away and, by extension, some of the flexibility in how you choose to approach combat.

Aside from the campaign, Sucker Punch seems to be placing a lot of stock in *First Light*'s challenge mode. The motivation for unlocking and upgrading Fetch's abilities is that you can return to the challenge mode's arena-based battles

– unlocked during the campaign – in order to best your scores and claw your way up the leaderboards. Is *inFamous*'s combat really strong enough to support a score attack mode built around it? For us, the answer is no.

We can't honestly say that *First Light* offers any compelling reason to return to a world that was not without its flaws in the first place and it's certainly not something we'd recommend to those of you who weren't interested in the main game. For those of you who love *Second Son*, though, the *inFamous* formula remains pretty much untouched in *First Light*, so, along with the addition of the challenge mode, we reckon you'll find plenty to enjoy.

Paul Walker-Emig

VERDICT

It might please hardcore *Second Son* fans, but this standalone expansion takes that game's fetish for style, at the expense of substance, to its apotheosis. It's beautiful, but a little empty.

55%

Alien: Isolation

Ripley's believe-it-or-not adventure



DETAILS

PUBLISHER

Sega

DEVELOPER

Creative Assembly

PSN PRICE

£54.99

PLAYERS

1

AGE RATING

18+

TWITTER

@AlienIsolation

Trophies 51



WE DON'T KNOW if Ridley Scott plays videogames – he seems like the kind of guy that would, though. If he happened to play

Alien: Isolation, we can't help but think of how he'd react to it – we're sure it must make him feel proud, but uncomfortable at the same time. *Alien: Isolation* is more than just a survival-horror game – it's the best *Alien* game that's ever been made, impressively and uncannily similar to Scott's original film.

The team at Creative Assembly kept the original Scott film playing on loop around them as it was developing the game, and that maniacal level of dedication shows in every inch of the Sevastopol station it created. The story takes place some 15 years after the original Ellen Ripley's ordeal aboard the *Nostromo*, and daughter Amanda Ripley's journey for closure begins as a colleague informs her of its arrival at a decommissioned colony hung in space across the galaxy.

The quality of *Isolation* is obvious from the second the game boots up – there's this cinematic grain that coats everything and makes the uber-realistic lighting carry this darker weight: every shadow looks loaded, every glint and reflection is sharp and meaningful. From the opening tutorial that sees you wake from hypersleep and stumble around the Torrens transport ship in your underwear, getting your balance, it's clear that *Alien: Isolation* isn't going to hold your hand... you're on your own from here.

The UI is stripped back and as minimal as it could be – it felt like Creative Assembly wanted to immerse you in a cinematic world as much as possible, so even on-screen prompts and notifications are tiny. It suits the way you're made to inspect *everything* – *Isolation* operates on a macro-level: spend too long gazing down Sevastopol's corridors and something will creep up behind you and impale you. Even waypointing is done through the Motion Tracker – the game world is as icon-free and clean as it can be.



The first few hours are purely tutorial – establishing the scene and dropping story beats that serve to outline just how bloody terrifying the Alien is. It isn't long until you meet him – from a distance – and Creative Assembly is smart with its reveal: you never see the full thing, in all its Lovecraftian glory, until later. The developer toys with you, and from the first reveal every creaking pipe and every muffled shuffle on the station will leave you wide-eyed and ready.

Isolation manages to pull off horror well. While it might not be packed to the gills with jump scares like *Outlast* or obsessed with gore to the level of the *Dead Space* series, *Alien* manages to be consistently tense. *Isolation* isn't about





△OX□ As useful as the Motion Tracker is, you never want to get to the point where you're relying on it. Just saying...



△OX□ This guy has had a terrible time. Don't follow his example – turns out staying alive is actually much more fun.

making you jump or shocking you for shock's sake – it relies on a more subtle terror, building up tension from before you even board the Sevastopol, making you more scared of *not* seeing the Alien than seeing it (because then, at least you know where it is...)

The campaign weighs in at a good 15 hours, probably more if you go back to explore the Metroidvania inspired open levels. *Alien: Isolation* doesn't lose anything from its longevity, though – in fact, it's just the right length – and the way it drops in new mechanics little-by-little (you don't have the Motion Tracker right away, for example, nor the tools necessary to access early locked doors) is a good lesson in pacing.



△OX□ It's not exactly the brightest of games, but we love that grim, gloomy atmosphere.

You're armed only with a few melee weapons to start, though guns do become available as you push on. You're going to rely more on the Motion Tracker – it's far more valuable than any gun. One discredit to *Alien's* pacing is the flamethrower – we played through the game on Hard, and while the weapon doesn't speed it up too much there, on Easy and Medium the flamer was like a licence to waltz through the rest of the game. We never found ourselves out of fuel for it, and it was usually sufficient to keep the Alien at bay whenever we ran into it. Setting fire to the Xenomorph *does* piss it off a bit, though.

When you're not being pushed on with an action-heavy story scene or cowering for your life under a table as the Alien stalks you, you'll probably be slinking from room to room in search of scrap. Ripley is an engineer, and her fiddly electronical know-how allows her to use blueprints collected from around the place to craft slipshod devices – Noisemakers, flares, healthpacks, improvised bombs... it's a skillset directly suited to surviving aboard the Sevastopol, and it adds another layer of gameplay to *Alien's* already watertight base – resource management.

△×□ The Alien itself – ‘the perfect organism’ – has been slightly redesigned for the game, but damn if it doesn’t look scarier.

The game also offers flashbacks to the events preceding *Alien* and *Isolation*, and peppers the narrative with references to wider *Alien* lore (but mostly rooted in the first film, don’t worry). Loyal to all the *Alien* tropes, Creative Assembly isn’t afraid to change things up later on, but this only serves to compound the tension and throw more red herrings your way. *Isolation* is a long game, but one that’s never going to let you relax.

Even the save stations don’t offer sanctuary – we got killed after we sprinted to a machine to cram a save, thinking (stupidly) the game would let up. The save machines are manual, requiring about seven seconds to work. We got five seconds in and – BAM – the Alien grabbed our head, pulled it back and the last thing we saw was that little Alien mouth going for our eyes.

It’s a game that keeps toying with you, telling you you’re going to do something and then going against it. It teases you, even – no spoilers, but there’s a cheeky reference some way into the game, and the way the game taunts you with it is fantastic. You have to remember in *Isolation* – you’re powerless, you’re prey and that’s never going to change.

You can’t just figure out the mechanics and work through the game without really thinking about it – the designers at

Creative Assembly have come up with a masterpiece in the Alien’s AI: you can feel it evolve and learn how to tackle you. Throw too many Noisemakers, and it’ll know to search for where they came from; keep escaping through vents, it’ll get its tail around your legs.

If that’s not enough, there are also human survivors that will shoot at you if you threaten their personal space, and unpredictable ‘Working Joe’ cyborgs that have this ‘for the greater good of the ship’ mentality that can be just as terrifying as the Xenomorph. All together, the three levels of AI form puzzles around some of the best level design we’ve seen in a horror game – the Sevastopol is a maze, and it takes some real thinking to get through.

The cyborgs have this hollow, uncanny quality to them that somehow makes the ship seem even more desolate than it is, and once angered, they’re practically unstoppable; if you can get a three-way rumble going between them, the humans and the Alien, you’re free to sneak around the back of it all and escape... if you’re quick and quiet enough.

We were told by the game’s designer Gary Napper that he played through *Isolation* on a ‘cannon run’: having the Alien kill everyone while never dirtying his own hands. We tried that, but it’s *hard*. The story makes you kill at one point, but

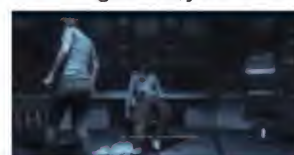
“ISOLATION OPERATES ON A MACRO-LEVEL: SPEND TOO LONG GAZING DOWN SEVASTOPOL’S CORRIDORS AND SOMETHING WILL CREEP UP BEHIND YOU AND IMPALE YOU”

Ripley’s reaction and subsequent attitude is a damn sight better realised than Lara’s was in the 2013 *Tomb Raider*. After that, it’s in your hands – it’s better not to kill, but often we couldn’t immediately see any viable alternative.

The persistence of the AI (both Alien and ‘Working Joe’) makes you keep changing up your playing style – Creative Assembly has built a detailed lo-fi science fiction universe, and it wants you to make the most of it. The permanent threat of death keeps you forced to the ground – we can’t remember the last game where we willingly snuck around so much – and it feels like the claustrophobic corridors and catwalks of the Sevastopol were built from that angle. Being crouched, looking up at everything... it really does give you that feeling that Creative Assembly wanted it all along – that ‘prey being hunted’ effect.



ONE SHOT
There’s a trophy for the player that can do *Alien: Isolation* without dying... good luck, you’ll need it.



MERCY OR PRUDENCE?
Finish the game without killing a human... you might not even do it intentionally.

△○×□ Come on now... surely you don't need your Motion Tracker to see that going that way isn't the best idea you've ever had?

△○×□ Yeah, we'd say being stalked by that big ugly bastard definitely qualifies as an 'emergency'. Go ahead and pull that lever.



PS3 DIFFERENCES



MOTION TRACKER

Your DualShock 4 will mimic the light transmitted by the Motion Tracker – flashing red means bad, right?

I SEE YOU...

The PS4 version offers PS Camera support. If you move too much whilst playing, enemies might see you.

I HEAR YOU...

The PS Camera can also pick up yelps of terror – we had to stop ourselves shouting in surprise because of this.

It makes a refreshing change from the feeling of being overpowered and able to kill anything that appears.

The graphics in *Isolation* speak for themselves, and it's one of the best-looking games we've played on the PS4 – the familiarity anyone that's seen *Alien* will take from it can't be understated. The sound design is equally as evocative, with every squeak of Ripley's sneakers on the linoleum floor making you cringe and every distant thud making you breathe deeply. The soundtrack actually reminded us of *BioShock Infinite* in the way it used music to misdirect you, building up violin trills and tempo before suddenly fading: 'there's no danger here,' it says, 'gotcha!'

Alien: Isolation has been in development for over three years, yet releases on the tail-end of a prolonged Indie-horror

movement. *Isolation* is refreshing for a triple-A title, though, because it shows the dedication and passion of an indie project, yet is as refined and polished as you'd expect a bigger-budget game to be. For a studio that's never made a survival-horror experience before, we are impressed with Creative Assembly because it has done a far better job than a lot of bigger studios have done in the same genre.

Dom Peppiatt

VERDICT

An extremely tense, lengthy rollercoaster ride through an experience that takes everything that made *Alien* great, and expertly applies it to games. Play it alone, at night.

90%



Disney Infinity 2.0

"We have a Hulk"



DETAILS

PUBLISHER

Disney Interactive

DEVELOPER

Avalanche Software

RELEASE DATE

Out now

PRICE

£59.99

PLAYERS

1-4

AGE RATING

7+

TWITTER

@DisneyInfinity

INSTALL SIZE

18 GB

Trophies 30



EVER SINCE

SKYLANDERS exploded onto the scene and turned the toy/gaming crossover into a billion-

dollar business model, everyone seems to want a piece of the action. But there's no company with more potential in this area than Disney, a firm that owns some of the most popular and recognisable characters and brands on the planet. After a strong gambit last year with *Disney Infinity*, this follow-up cashes in on Marvel mania off the back of *Avengers* and *Guardians Of The Galaxy* destroying box office records and while the game doesn't look to have changed all that much at a glance, there's quite a lot going on a layer or two beneath the surface that makes *Infinity 2.0* both a better game and a worse one, depending on what you're looking for.

Using *Infinity* Play Sets in place of bespoke licensed games to tie in with Disney/Pixar/Marvel movies was a masterstroke on the team's part – nobody aside from Trophy hunters will miss games like *Up* and *Bolt*, and this format offers Disney a uniform set of solid mechanics for new releases and the consumer the benefit of a reduced RRP and getting some pretty cool figurines when buying into what would once have been standalone games. There could easily have been a standalone *Guardians*

game, for instance, but the Play Set now takes its place, easier to develop and with toys thrown into the bargain as an added bonus. Because of the catch-all nature of *Infinity's* mechanics, the Play Set games are never going to be anything spectacular, but the games they replace weren't either, so no loss there. Still, the first game came with three Play Sets (one for each of the bundled characters) whereas here, you only get one – three *Avengers* come in the box along with the portal and there's just the *Avengers* Play Set in terms of story content. It's pretty basic too, with a budget *Lego Marvel* feel to it, which is a shame when the triple Play

Set of the original managed to show off a trio of different gameplay styles possible in the game's versatile engine.

Still, we'd argue that the Play Sets aren't the star attraction here and the unassuming little plastic hexagons that come in the box with the cool toys back this up. These enable Toy Box Games, somewhat simpler affairs created using the same tools that you have at your disposal once you start to unlock some of the more interesting logic circuits and other technical parts. On surface level, Toy Box appears to be nothing more than a themed *Minecraft* ripoff but what we have here is actually an incredibly



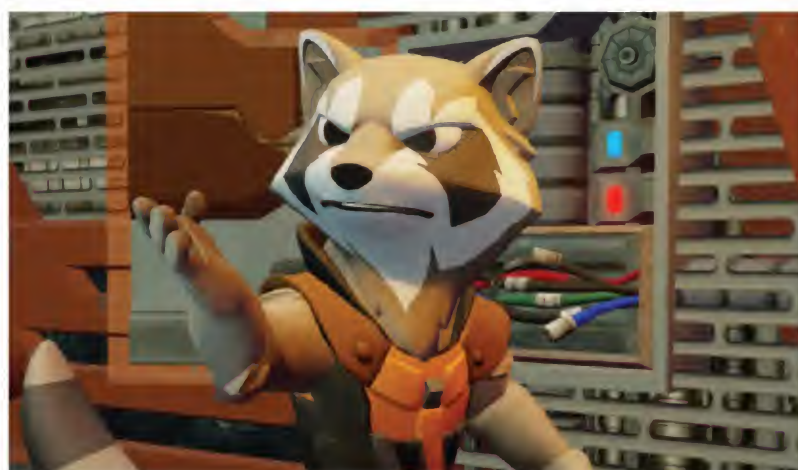
△○× Tony Stark's holiday home was pretty nice. But then all the frogs came. So many frogs. Save us, Mickey!



△○×□ Assault On Asgard is a tower defence horde mode, effectively. It's amazing what you can make with these tools...



“WE MADE A FOOTBALL GAME WHERE SCORING A GOAL WOULD TRIGGER A PITCH INVASION BY 150 WINNIE THE POOHS”



deep and complex creation suite. While plonking down a couple of houses or a racetrack might be enough to keep some people entertained, the two bundled Toy Box Games show just what is possible with this supremely flexible creation tool – one is an isometric hack-and-slash RPG with companion characters and potential for randomly generated levels, while the other is a full-featured tower

△○×□ There's a bit of *Guardians* love even without buying the Play Set. Just check the Toy Box Games.

defence game with an action twist as your chosen hero can still get involved in the action. Just as with *LittleBigPlanet*'s story missions, it's incredible to think that these are built with the same tools offered to players and so long as the community gets behind the game (which it will, because Disney), there should be no shortage of amazing user-created Toy Box challenges, levels and games to download and enjoy, even if you don't have the requisite patience or ability to create your own.

And even if you can't be doing with all the hassle of creating an entire world or game from scratch, you can still get creative. Interior design is a key new feature and you're able to build, style and furnish your own house however you like. It's just a digital doll house, sure, but it's still a good stepping stone towards the wider creativity of Toy Box's mad potential and by the time you've built your dream home, you'll probably be ready to get out there and experiment with the intricacies of Toy Box. We made an awesome little football game where scoring a goal would trigger a pitch invasion by 150 Winnie The Poohs, which in turn crashed the game. We'd complain, but then we can't imagine that's something that the QA team would ever have thought to do,



and it's hardly fair to expect them to share our affinity for idiotic excess. That said, Tony Stark's House Of Frogs didn't fare much better, duly warning us that online players may have issue with the level at about half frog capacity before the frame rate died on its arse when the game decided that there were enough frogs. There weren't enough frogs. There can always be more frogs.

A single Play Set is something of a disappointment, then, but when the two packaged Toy Box games are already better than the main attraction anyway, that speaks volumes for where the meat of the game lies. Kids might get a kick out of smashing through a Play Set, but everyone else will find the Toy Box to be pretty much the entire game. And that's fair enough, because the Toy Box is incredible. The addition of skill trees for both new arrivals and existing characters is awesome, but we've got a funny feeling that the community will do more with these – and pretty much every other aspect of the game – than the developer does itself. But then they did make the tools in the first place, so we guess we'll let them off...

Luke Albigés

VERDICT

While the Play Set adventures still aren't anything particularly special, the vastly improved Toy Box allows for some incredible player creations. Avengers assemble indeed.

80%



NHL 15

Stick with it, guys

“EA CANADA MAY HAVE DROPPED THE PUCK WHEN IT COMES TO MODES AND OPTIONS”



DETAILS

PUBLISHER
EA Sports

DEVELOPER
EA Canada

RELEASE DATE
Out Now

PRICE
£49.99

PLAYERS
1-4

AGE RATING
12+

INSTALL SIZE
25 GB

TWITTER
@EASportsNHL

Trophies 50



ALSO ON PS3

THE TRANSITION TO a new generation is never easy for even the biggest franchises, so you can only imagine how tough it is for something like *NHL* – a game that sits behind *FIFA*, *Madden* and even *NBA* on EA Sports' list of priorities, or at least it seems to based on the evidence presented here. All the pre-release talk was of recreating the match day experience just as *FIFA* does so well and of the new physics on both puck and players making for a more realistic affair, and in both those areas it's fair to say that the team has delivered. But looking at a side-by-side list of features and modes between the PS4 and PS3 versions makes for sorry reading, with a stadium's worth of long-standing fan favourites stripped back on PS4 in order to get the game out on time. Some will be coming in post-launch patches, sure, but what, how and when is still up in the air and the lack of parity is jarring all the same – the PS4 version should be the clear winner but in this rare instance, we'd recommend that hockey fans take the hit and plump for the PS3 version instead.

The odd thing is, if you're not all that into the actual sport (and let's face it, it's not all that easy to closely follow the NHL in the UK) then *NHL 15* is still one of the best games of hockey you'll play regardless of platform – EA Canada may have dropped the puck when it comes to modes and options but all credit to the team for smashing together a thoroughly enjoyable sports game. The new physics generally work pretty well, with loose pucks, crazy deflections and player pile-ups a little more acceptable here, in a sport where these things actually happen, as opposed to *FIFA*'s somewhat embarrassing physics shenanigans when the new systems were first introduced. AI players can make the occasional odd decision (but then what sports game can claim otherwise?) but taken as a primarily multiplayer game, just like many people play *FIFA*, it's really good fun.

As good as the new NBC-style presentation may be, there are a handful of issues with the whole thing all the same. Mike 'Doc' Emrick and Eddie Olczyk don't just lend their voices for play-by-play commentary but actually turn up

in person for live video introductions to matches – while novel, it just makes the decent visuals of the game itself look much worse when compared to real people and you'll soon start to see the same footage when playing with the most popular teams. Similarly, the commentary itself is quick to repeat itself, something that's hard to avoid when the speed of the sport means play-by-play needs to be built from lots of smaller blocks than tend to be used in slower sports like football or golf. It just ends up feeling bitty and at odds with the lifelike broadcast presentation on offer – you can kill the commentary but it just ends up feeling a little lifeless if you do, while sticking music on in the background means you lose the satisfying crunches of big hits, rings as the puck rockets into the goal frame and other little nuances like the improved crowd reactions to proceedings.

Even the modes that are present aren't as full-featured as they have been in recent years, leading to some eyebrow-raising oversights. Be A GM mode returns but only as a shadow of its former self, with much of the depth lost and with it much of the purpose of the mode itself.



△OX□ The game looks stunning at times, but it's a shame this visual sheen comes at the cost of features.



Be A Pro loses the ability to sim through time while your player isn't on the ice, meaning the early stages are primarily spent watching matches as your rookie warms the bench and only gets to hit the ice when everyone else is knackered. Even Ultimate Team hasn't survived fully intact, streamlined to the point of oversimplification. And it's not just the *NHL* faithful that will notice omissions like these – those who play the equivalent modes in *FIFA* and *Madden* will be surprised to see how little there is to do here as you collect cards and attempt to assemble the perfect hockey team.

Add in one of the strangest bugs we've ever encountered (frame rate takes a massive hit and renders the game borderline unplayable when playing while connected to the internet through a router with UPnP enabled, the only solutions being to disable the router option or go totally offline and lose even more features) and the PS4 version of *NHL 15* is something of a disappointment. Casual players who just want a speedy *FIFA* alternative for multiplayer madness are well served by a game that has seldom

been better on the ice but contrary to pretty much every other major EA Sports brand (bar the ropey *NBA Live* games), it's fans who stand to be most disappointed.

After some nail-biting multiplayer sessions, we'd be quick to recommend the game to anyone with only a passing interest in the sport but if you follow the *NHL* at all, your best options are to go for the feature-complete PS3 version or just skip a year. *FIFA*'s a pretty good alternative, guys – we first got into the *NHL* games as a *PES* alternative, so it stands to reason that the transition could work the other way as well. Hell, the least you hockey fans could do is to give that a bash while EA gets its shit together on PS4 with this one.

Luke Albigés

VERDICT

It still plays a great game of hockey but in losing game modes and features that long-term players will miss, *NHL 15* on PS4 is pretty hard to recommend to fans.

63%



△OX□ Crowds are really impressive, reacting properly to bad calls or incredible home team goals.



Warriors Orochi 3 Ultimate

Always been a warrior, back from when I remember...



ALSO ON PS3 & VITA

DURING THE FIRST year of a new console's lifecycle, you expect some level of graphical overlap between the twilight games on the old hardware and the fledgling games on the new hardware. It just stands to reason that the full potential of the new processors will take some time to unlock. However, what you don't expect is for a non-indie title to come along that's more reminiscent of the generation before last – unless, of course, you're talking about the *Warriors* series, in which case it's less of a surprise and more of a forgone conclusion.

It's easy to criticise the *Warriors* series for its old-school sensibilities and unwillingness to change, but when you look at the combined sales figures – which are just shy of 30 million – it's clear that some of us just can't get enough of the runaway lawnmower routine. To this end, *Warriors Orochi 3 Ultimate* is about as typical a sequel as an Omega Force game gets. It's an

updated version of the third game in the *Orochi* crossover series, and while that translates to a lot of characters and content, the only real difference between this and the PlayStation 3 version are the larger crowds of enemies, the higher resolution textures and the option to hear dialogue through the DualShock 4 speaker.

As far as generational jumps go, *Warriors Orochi 3 Ultimate* is more of a tentative hop than a lunging leap. The previous game introduced the new 'Wonder' character type, the formidable True Triple Attack Mode and a playable version of Ryu Hayabusa from *Ninja Gaiden*, and for the most part, *Ultimate* follows suit. The inclusion of Kasumi from *Dead Or Alive* and Sophitia from *SoulCalibur* brings the total number of playable characters up to a hefty 145, and although the story still has you travelling back in time to stop the advance of Orochi and his demon army, the addition of four new chapters effectively doubles the length of the Story mode.

The general flow of the game will be familiar to anyone who's played a *Warriors* game since the latter half of the PlayStation 2 era. Each mission has its own victory conditions, and by hunting down the enemy officers and creating space for your AI soldiers to advance, you'll gradually turn the tide of battle. That aspect of the game is still rewarding, especially when you ramp up the difficulty, but what ultimately lets *Ultimate* down is the tepid combat system. You can parry an enemy's attack, commandeer a dragon-shaped

DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Koei Tecmo

DEVELOPER
Omega Force

PRICE
£54.99

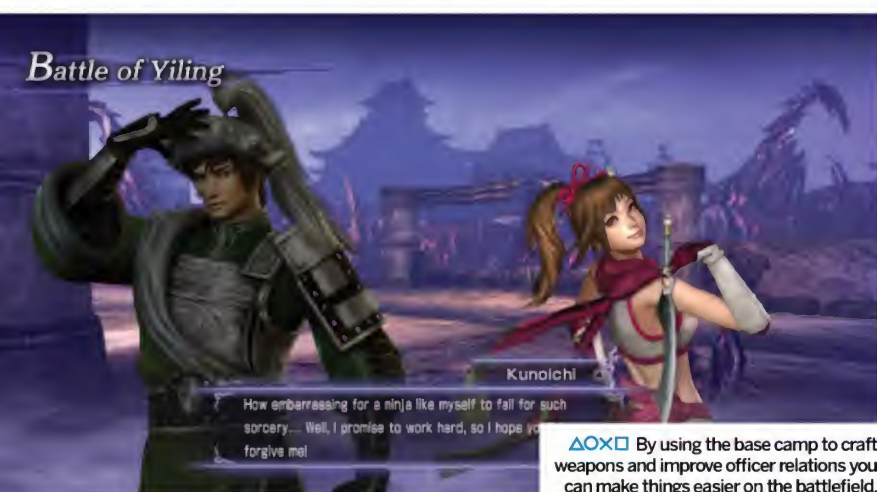
PLAYERS
1-2

INSTALL SIZE
21 GB

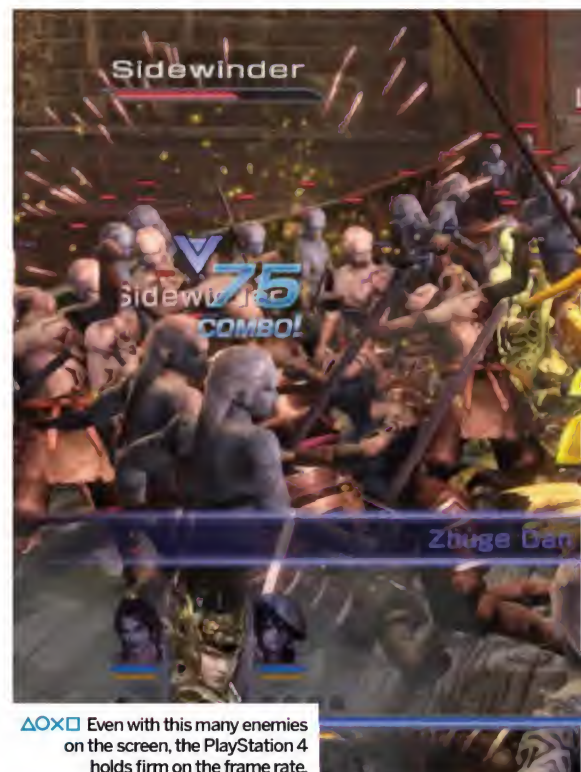
AGE RATING
12+

TWITTER
@koeitecmoeurope

Trophies 44



△○×□ By using the base camp to craft weapons and improve officer relations you can make things easier on the battlefield.





△×□ The True Triple Attack Mode always ends in a finishing move and a flashy pose.



TROPHY CABINET
ONE WARRIOR VS TEN THOUSAND
Killing 10,000 enemies in a single mission is more time consuming than anything else. Just keep hitting everything you see.



HEROES FROM BEYOND
To get your hands on Sophitia and Kasumi, you have to clear the Battle of Liaodong and Yanzhou in Chapter Two.



tank and switch between your three characters mid-combo. But even when you add all these elements together, it rarely feels like experimentation is encouraged. It's far easier just to find something cheap and then abuse the hell out of it.

That's always been one of the series' less desirable traits. It doesn't

Blizzard's finest but you'd be hard pressed to find a more relevant comparison. The same is also true of the returning Duel mode and its rough attempt to turn *Ultimate* into a three-on-three fighting game. *Marvel Vs Capcom 3* it certainly isn't, but as interesting sideshow that harks right back to the very first *Warriors* game, it's forgettable

“EXPERIMENTATION IS RARELY ENCOURAGED. IT'S FAR EASIER TO FIND SOMETHING CHEAP AND ABUSE THE HELL OUT OF IT”

have the technical sophistication to challenge the hack-and-slash greats, and yet, there's something haphazardly admirable about the way Omega Force continues to innovate within its own creative vacuum. The new Gauntlet mode is a prime example of this. It takes the basis of the main Story mode – which is to dominate the battlefield – and applies it to multi-tiered dungeons. You start on the first floor with five characters that you can arrange into different formations, and as you fight your way through the assembled enemies and loot the various chests, you advance to the lower levels with better gear.

It feels almost disingenuous to compare this makeshift mode to

at worst and a guilty pleasure at best. That sums up *Warriors Orochi 3 Ultimate* fairly well. There's nothing here that's going to change your mind if you dislike the series already, but if your love of Musou attacks and Eastern history hasn't faltered since 2000, there's a lot of game here for the money.

Matt Edwards

VERDICT

It's not quite up there with the likes of *Dynasty Warriors 8 XL*, but if you think you know your Lu Bus from your Liu Beis, *Warriors Orochi 3 Ultimate* is at least worth considering.

62%



Tales Of Xillia 2

Are you ready for another Arte attack?



DETAILS

PUBLISHER

Bandai Namco

DEVELOPER

Bandai Namco

PSN PRICE

£44.99

PLAYERS

1-4

INSTALL SIZE

5GB

AGE RATING

16+

TWITTER

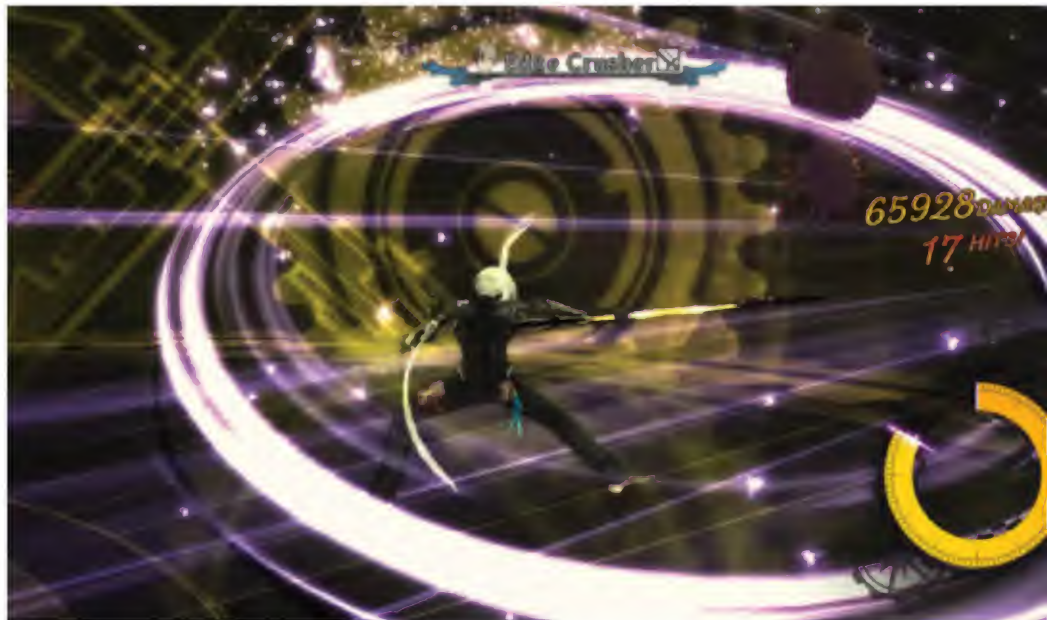
@TalesofU

Trophies 49



EVEN IF YOU bust your ass for minimum wage on a daily basis, the fact remains that most of us are able to earn a crust (or at least scrape by) without the fear of going bankrupt. Even so, the idea of being in an almost crippling amount of debt isn't something that many (if any) videogames have touched upon. It seems strange, then, that *Tales Of Xillia 2* – the direct sequel to last year's *Tales Of Xillia* – fancies itself as a bit of a debt consolidation simulator, because as soon as you have stepped into the shoes of Ludger Kresnik, the smartly dressed protagonist, you're slapped with a bill for 20,000,000 Gald.

To put that into perspective, we'd paid off roughly 500,000 Gald after playing the game for nearly 20 hours, but far from being an insightful take on the current economic climate (this is a JRPG with a spell-casting schoolgirl, after all), the debt only serves to pad out the completion time. To open up different areas and advance the game's story, you have to pay off the debt in larger and larger instalments. The most

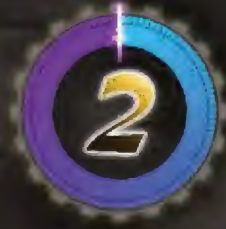


△×□ Kitty Dispatch lets you send your army of cats to hunt down rare items. One of them is called Schrodinger, obviously.





DAMAGE!
POWER HITS!
x160%



△OX□ This game makes a big deal out of post-fight banter and over-the-top win poses.

△OX□ Increase your affinity with your party members and you'll be treated to a wide range of bonus scenes.

efficient way to do this is by completing the various side-missions, but when these boil down to fetch quests and monster culls, the whole process quickly becomes a chore.

Thankfully, the intriguing story and excellent voice acting go a long way to making the grind worthwhile. The game is geared towards those who saw the first *Xillia* through to completion, but even if you don't know the difference between Rieze Maxia and Elympios, the story isn't all that hard to follow. It all kicks off when Ludger has a chance encounter with Jude and Elle – respectively the protagonist from the first game and an eight-year-old girl who's searching for the mythical Land of Canaan. All three get caught up a terrorist attack on a speeding train, and before you know it, Ludger is battling through parallel dimensions alongside the cast of the first game.

Judge a *Tales* game purely on its story and it'll be above-average at best, but what makes this series stand out from the crowd is the technical and fast-paced combat system. It's not quite up to 2D fighting game standards in terms of complexity but there are many shared principles. It's all about evading enemy attacks, managing your Technical Points and learning which Artes build the most devastating combos, and while the same could be said of the last five *Tales* games, *Xillia 2* mixes things up with two

new systems. Weapon Swap lets you switch between three different weapon types on the fly – primarily to target an enemy's weakness – while Chromatus is a Limit Break-style move that turns Ludger temporarily invincible.

As far as new mechanics go, these are less game-changers and more

Tales Of Vesperia, its mix of recycled environments and financial woes just doesn't command the same sense of epic discovery. But for every tepid turn you take during the enforced downtime, there's a tricky boss battle, comical side-story or lost cat to draw you back in. And even though Ludger is little

“WHAT MAKES THIS SERIES STAND OUT FROM THE CROWD IS THE TECHNICAL AND FAST-PACED COMBAT SYSTEM”

subtle additions, and yet, considering how much strategic depth and party customisation the series offers already, it's easy to understand why the development team didn't shake the boat too vigorously. This isn't a bold new sequel that takes the themes and pillars of the last game and then fashions them into something genuinely fresh – it's the next episode in an existing storyline. You also have some minor say in how the story unfolds, and when we say minor, we mean the odd two-pronged dialogue choice that seems to have little bearing on Ludger's ultimate destiny. *Mass Effect* this certainly isn't.

It's safe to say that *Tales Of Xillia 2* didn't exactly wow us, and compared to the likes of *Tales Of Symphonia* and

more than a blank vessel for the player's actions, the returning characters deliver a charming performance that's only slightly marred by anime cliché. This isn't a game worth borrowing £45 off a loan shark, then, but if you have the funds to spare and are in the mood for a solid JRPG, you could do a lot worse.

Matt Edwards

VERDICT

The *Tales* team tends to steer well clear of traditional numbered sequels, and so *Tales Of Xillia 2* is something of an oddity, truth be told. It's a good JRPG but not a great one.

71%

WHAT YOU'RE SAYING...

@Elympios All aboard The 10 o'clock hype train from Trigrleph Central Station.

@Leeargold Tales Of Xillia 2 got almost a whole page in Metro. That's more than the #Kardashians lot and #GeordieShore stunners :)

@sentireal Bankruptcy happens next. So much debt.

mayu u You Tube Meh main protagonist doesn't talk T.T kinda bugs me.... But I'll deal with it :l

Elijah nieves You Tube It's really awesome that Josh Grelle does Ludger. From what I know he doesn't really do a lot of video games

furiousbeast You Tube Really don't like the new art style, much preferred the style of the first one.

FOR FANS OF...

NI NO KUNI: WRATH OF THE WHITE WITCH It may be few shades more jovial than *Tales Of Xillia 2* but this collaboration between Level-5 and Studio Ghibli is arguably the PS3's standout JRPG.

Danganronpa 2: Goodbye Despair

A trip you won't want to miss



DETAILS

PUBLISHER

NIS America

DEVELOPER

Spike Chunsoft

PSN PRICE

£34.99

PLAYERS

1

INSTALL SIZE

1.6 GB

AGE RATING

16+

TWITTER

@NISAmEurope

Trophies 47



SCHOOL TRIPS CAN

be a bit rubbish. The thrill of getting out of the classroom quickly

dissipates as you realise that everything has gone horribly wrong – you've done everything at the venue before, your tent smells a lot like dead fish and the teacher has a spike through their foot. But our childhood memories are nothing compared to what the kids of Hope's Peak Academy have to go through, as what appears to be a tranquil school trip to a resort island is interrupted by a black and white stuffed bear. Yes, Monokuma's back and he's keeping the kids on that island – unless, that is, one of them can get away with murder.

As you might expect, after the customary lengthy visual novel introduction, the inevitable fragile pact of non-violence is quickly broken and the game proper begins. Your task is to look around the scene of the crime and surrounding areas for clues, before using them to solve the murder at the ensuing class trial. As in the previous game, the trial consists of a variety of different mini-games – Hangman's

Gambit and Nonstop Debate both return, with the latter now allowing you to support statements as well as oppose them, while Bullet Time Battle has been replaced with the very similar Panic Talk Battle. There are also two new games: Rebuttal Showdown and Logic Dive.

Rebuttal Showdown is a game in which one of the other characters interrupts you and challenges your assertions directly, requiring you to cut down their words with the touchscreen or analogue stick in order to progress

the argument to their contradictory statement. It's a nice touch of action, and one that strays considerably less far from the trial format than Logic Dive. In this game, you'll surf down a wireframe tube while avoiding simple obstacles and answering consecutive multiple-choice questions. It's an interesting way to present the format, but it's a tad out of place as a traditional action sequence in a non-action game and it isn't quite as robust as we'd like, with collisions proving slightly flaky.





Mahiru Koizumi

“THE INEVITABLE FRAGILE PACT OF NON-VIOLENCE IS QUICKLY BROKEN”



Ibuki Mioda

They got hamburger, ramen noodles, chili beans, bratwurst, pasta... Ooooh, melons!

AOX The absurdity of the original has been retained in the sequel and permeates the game.



ANY OBJECTIONS?
Clearing a class trial without damage is tricky – judicious use of your concentration ability is key.



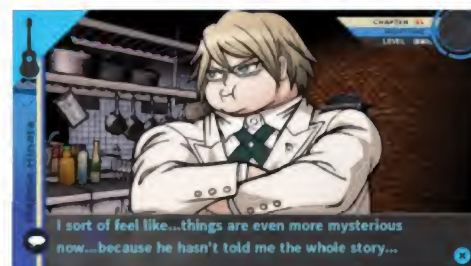
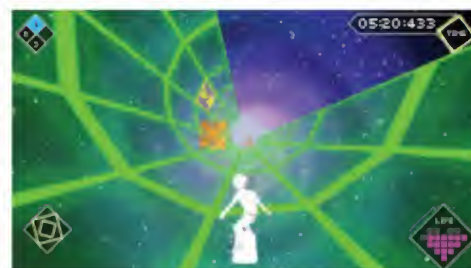
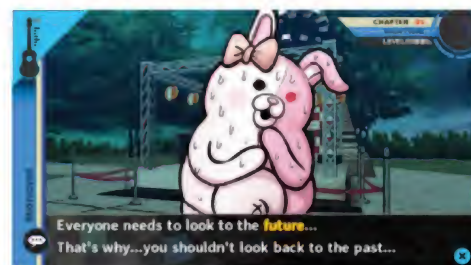
THE AIRBORNE STATIC EVENT
The special ability Cheat Code is invaluable – it'll let you hit phrases without penalty while blasting at white noise.

The trial sequences also highlight the game's visual strengths, an aspect which is ironically often neglected in visual novels. Despite the fact that characters are rendered exclusively as 2D cutouts in 3D environments, the combination of well-drawn poses and excellent camera work conveys the impact of dramatic revelations well. In fact, the game rarely looks bad – indeed, the juxtaposition of calm beaches with murder is more effective in creating an uneasy atmosphere than the obviously creepy halls of Hope's Peak Academy.

But no matter how well presented the game may be, the effort would all be worthless if the murders weren't worth solving. Luckily, this is where the game's strong writing comes in – each killing is complex enough to require some real thought, but can be followed logically without trouble. Better yet, that same

strong writing extends to the characters, each of which is distinctly characterised and can be interacted with during free time. As the game progresses, you learn who they were before the killings began and discover their hopes and fears. They really grow on you, and because of that a genuine sense of dread quickly develops – you'll hope your favourites don't become victims (or worse, killers).

That having been said, *Danganronpa 2* is quick to offset its dark moments with absurdity. The game frequently references games, anime and internet culture, as well as throwing around sexual innuendo and profanity like they're going out of fashion. Much of this is preserved from the original Japanese script, though other references (particularly a Rick Astley one we caught) seem like they were added for our benefit – all of which goes to indicate a strong localisation effort.



In fact, our only major bugbear with the script is that starting here isn't the best option. You don't necessarily need to have played the original to enjoy this as the plot is largely self-contained, but certain ties between the two games aren't explained as thoroughly as we'd have liked. A working knowledge of the first game significantly aids your understanding of certain scenes in the second, and so we'd advise you play that first. It's a cracking game anyway...

Nick Thorpe

VERDICT

With improved trial sequences and another excellent plot, *Danganronpa 2: Goodbye Despair* is a brilliant sequel – but it's a sequel that's definitely best played after the original.

89%

REVIEW ROUND-UP

OKAY, SO YOU know how last issue we said that we were unlikely to find a more disparate set of games to cover in the space of two pages than those we featured? Yeah, we were wrong – this issue's selection is even more eclectic than the last. PlayStation Plus freebie **VELOCITY 2X [A]** is first under the microscope and seeing as how we have the Platinum for the original game, we thought we might be pretty well equipped to blitz this sequel in a matter of minutes. But oh, how wrong we were. FuturLab hasn't messed all that much with the original concept – go extremely fast, shoot everything, collect everything and get to the goal on time – but several new features change things up just enough to be really interesting. On-foot sections should be awful on paper and while they do mess with the breakneck pace a little, they're just as tight as the main ship bits and offer a similarly rewarding flow once you master the new abilities. Perfect ratings still require every category to be aced in a single death-free

run and although a few of the stages are simply too long or complex for that to be much fun, chasing the Perfect dream on the more concise ones is more than satisfying enough to excuse the gruelling/gargantuan/gimmick stages that only Platinum hunters will really need to worry about nailing. Speaking of Platins, **MINECRAFT [B]** has one now that it has finally arrived on PS4, although it's not entirely clear right now just how much support the port will see now that Microsoft has thrown an obscenely

“EVERY ATTEMPT TO GAIN YARDS FEELS LIKE A UNIQUE STRUGGLE, WHETHER YOU’RE PLAYING ANOTHER HUMAN OR THE AI”

large wad of cash at the barn door long after the horse bolted and lead creative bod Notch has moved onto new projects. You know the drill by now – enter your own blocky playground and build, survive, explore

or just generally do whatever the hell you want. The main benefit of the PS4 version is that maps can be many times the size of their PS3 counterparts, leading to all kinds of new possibilities for both creative and adventurous players. It's not exactly pushing the hardware but it's still something that PS4 owners have been crying out for and with a cheaper upgrade option for those who own the PS3 version, there's little reason not to go super size if you're a fan. As we say, this will

△○×□ On-foot sections have a similar flow to ship stages, but it's even easier to miss destructible objects crucial to earning a Perfect rank.



△○×□ If you still haven't played Minecraft, you're probably in the minority – millions have come to love the blocky sandbox.





likely be the last taste of *Minecraft* you get on a non-Microsoft format, but then the idea of a Rare-developed *Minecraft 2: Avatar Edition* doesn't really do it for us anyway.

What *does* do it for us, however, are games where ninjas kick the crap out of one another in explosive battles where no colour goes unloved. Thank goodness, then, for (deep breath) **NARUTO SHIPPUDEN: ULTIMATE NINJA STORM REVOLUTION [C]**, a game that ticks that very specific box with aplomb. What it lacks in story content, the game makes up in other areas – you're looking at over 100 playable characters and a tightly refined fighting engine, placing the emphasis on competitive play via the tournament setting and new online options. As ever, it's a solid fighting game and superb



fan service, offering impressive anime-style ninja combat for both those who follow the manga/anime and those who just like bombastic battles. However much we may love these games, we hope this is the last we see of CyberConnect2 on PS3. Between this and *Asura's Wrath*, we genuinely can't wait to see what the crazy team can cook up on PS4.

Man... that would have been a perfect segue into a review of *Senran Kagura: Bon Appetit!* (apologies if we use it again next issue) but it doesn't really work so well going into **MADDEN 15 [D]**. Then again, it probably wouldn't be worth spending hours concocting some tenuous reference that pretty much nobody would get. We're not DOWN with that. Get it? Sigh. As EA Sports' big money-spinner in the US, it's unsurprising to find the same amazing production values



ΔOXΔ The team has really mastered the cel-shaded anime visuals. We can't wait until it is let loose on PS4...



in *Madden* as in *FIFA* – fan service of an entirely different kind to that which is at the core of the *Naruto* games, if you will. Insane versatility with each play you call makes every attempt to gain yards feel like a unique struggle whether you're playing another human (you are a human, right?) or the AI, while solid gameplay is backed up by great visuals and content and modes for days. If you're even vaguely into American football, you need this in your life. If you haven't already got it. Which you probably have, because you like American football and it's a really good American football game. Damn.

ΔOXΔ *Madden* sure as hell looks the part this year. And unlike *NHL 15*, it manages to retain a full complement of modes and features, too.





PUBLISHER SQUARESOFT

DEVELOPER SQUARESOFT

FORMAT PLAYSTATION

RELEASE DATE 17 NOVEMBER 1997 (PAL)

PLAY SCORE 93%

METACRITIC SCORE 92/100

The Making Of... FINAL FANTASY VII

One of the most successful games ever, Final Fantasy VII stood out from the sea of traditional RPGs. From Blade Runner to Indiana Jones, sci-fi to fantasy, Rebecca Richards explores the roots of Final Fantasy VII's origin story in this exclusive interview with director Yoshinori Kitase



It was clear right from the opening cutscene that this was going to be a game like nothing we'd played before. The shifting stars in the depths of space are your first clue that this is a story more concerned with science fiction than fantasy; the mysterious flower girl and grubby industrial city are all that we're shown before the camera pans down, urgent music begins, you backflip off a train and it's immediately go time.

Movies played an undeniably strong role in the formation of *Final Fantasy VII*. Like most films, you weren't told the story of these characters through lengthy cutscenes simply narrating a tale; you discovered their story by playing the game. Speaking candidly about the science fiction influences for *Final Fantasy VII*, director Yoshinori Kitase reveals some of his favourite nods to sci-fi in *Final Fantasy VII*. "The opening shot swooping over Midgar may well have been influenced by the opening to *Blade Runner*," muses Kitase, whose boyhood love for *Star Wars* not only prompted him to study film as an adult but sparked a life-long love for science fiction. "That film starts with a wide aerial shot of a near-future version of LA and the opening concludes with a shot tracking up to the inside of the Tyrell corporation building. For *FFVII*, we decided to take that one step further as part of a game and continue with a seamless shift into controlling the characters. This kind of immersive sequence was something that could only be done through the medium of a game."

But *Final Fantasy VII* wasn't hardcore sci-fi; nor was it traditional fantasy. Of course, mechanically, *Final Fantasy VII* is inarguably an RPG, but its themes and influences are varied and plentiful. *Final Fantasy VII* drew on countless influences from all kinds of genres, in an attempt to create something that the games industry really hadn't seen much of before: a game that didn't stick to a tried-and-tested,

recognisable genre, but one that experimented with several, from horror to mystery to action and adventure. "In the *Indiana Jones* movies, there is always a scene where Indy has a one-on-one fist fight with an imposing soldier-type enemy in a perilous location," continues Kitase. "In the first one it was on top of a plane, in the second one it was on a mine cart and in the third one on top of a tank. One scene in *FFVII* that was inspired by this was where Tifa and Scarlet fight in out on top of the main cannon barrel at Junon."

But looking to the film industry for inspiration extended far beyond simply being inspired by iconic movies for specific scenes. Due to the technological advancements made with the PlayStation, a much more cinematic approach could be taken with *Final Fantasy VII*, to the point where not only the FMV sequences but some of the interactive scenes within the game itself were storyboarded like a movie. While Kitase himself is refreshingly humble about his influence on the project – "games are always a coming together of ideas from many different creators and so they do not get made entirely through the vision and inspiration of one specific individual" – he was heavily involved, bringing his background in studying film-making and scriptwriting at Nihon University to the game. "I actually wrote out the storyboards for most of the cutscenes in *FFVII*, though Yusuke Naora and Tetsuya Nomura also participated in the storyboarding," says Kitase. "I certainly put what I learned from my student activities to good use in that, but you can't simply use the grammar of film as-is for a game."

"Our storyboards for games prior to *FFVII* were all in 2D and thus had all the constraints imposed by 2D and were limited in what they could show for a visual medium which makes use of depth and space. On the other hand, film-type storyboards do allow a freedom to create structure in 3D but function on a single fixed timeline and so lack the interactive



△○×□ The only thing Kitase regrets is not being able to include voice acting. Personally, we prefer the silence.

elements involving player action that games have," Kitase continues. "This meant that *FFVII* called for a different type of storyboard production that was neither of the above. This production method had to seek a feeling of depth like that found in film but at the same time not be rigid and keep an awareness of interactive changes. So that is why the process put my film studies knowledge to good use but that knowledge alone was not enough to realise it completely." Even now, when videogame graphics have moved on to

we finally managed to do it on *FFVII* and that really enhanced how expressive we could be."

All of this focus on cinematics wasn't simply to impress; it was all about the player creating a bond with the characters. "We really tried to make it so that the player became one with the characters and saw the world through their eyes. For this reason, we felt that the dramatic cutscenes and the playable sections could not be separate, disjointed entities," says Kitase. "In most games at that

point, the animated or CG movie scenes and the playable game scenes were shown in completely separate ways and players' emotional responses to these were very

much split and separate. So in *FFVII* we made it so that the transitions between the beautiful CG scenes and the playable game screen was done seamlessly and took great care in designing the levels to allow this."

Every scene in *Final Fantasy VII* was carefully considered to evoke a certain response from the player. The static camera allowed for a lot more control over how the player viewed a scene, from the close-ups of the Don's looming house to the intimacy of Aerith's church. We ask what the most important element is in creating a relatable yet unforgettable scene. "The music and the camera work and scene cutting that synchronises with that," says Kitase. "In every scene there is always a single pivotal dramatic and memorable action. For example, the moment when the airship appears and fills the whole screen or the scene where the regular soldier (eg Cloud) picks up his helmet etc. I made sure to fine-tune the script and camera work

"WE FELT THAT THE DRAMATIC CUTSCENES AND THE PLAYABLE SECTIONS COULD NOT BE SEPARATE, DISJOINTED ENTITIES"

such realistic levels. *Final Fantasy VII*'s art direction and cinematography ensures that the game is still as engaging as ever. As any *Final Fantasy* aficionado can tell you, *Final Fantasy VII* had a totally different tone from any of the *Final Fantasy* games that had come before.

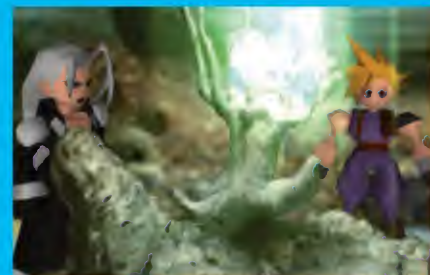
This break from convention came from a shake-up of the way that games themselves were created, as Kitase reveals to us. "The production setup changed radically for *VII*. At the time Squaresoft only had 2D artists so we went out and scouted a large number of artists experienced in 3D CG," he says. "The production team was a fusion of games industry 2D artists and 3D artists that had come from the visual animation industry, which was incredibly stimulating and there were many things I learned for the first time in that environment. The fact that it was done in 3D CG was a big difference. I had thought about using 3D visual sequences with a sense of depth for *FFVI* and previous games too, but

BLUFFER'S GUIDE

Everything you need to know in five facts



1 *Final Fantasy VII* is the highest-selling instalment in the series, having shifted 10 million copies.



2 *Final Fantasy VII* was the first game in the series to use pre-rendered 3D backgrounds.



3 It was the most expensive game ever made until *Star Wars: The Old Republic*.



4 There are over 40 minutes of full-motion video played throughout the game.



5 It had a huge marketing campaign, with everything from a Pepsi promotion to comics.



△○×□ A bad guy with one of the most recognisable theme songs going, Sephiroth is a great antagonist.

STANDOUT MOMENT



Cloud's Amnesia

No-one is safe, not even the protagonist

You were probably expecting us to pick (spoilers!) Aerith's death, or the beautifully handled cross-dressing section, but we're going with Cloud's amnesia, or rather the way it was handled. While Aerith's death was immediately shocking, it also firmly re-established that any character was vulnerable. So when Cloud went into his shock-based daze, we felt a real sense of concern for his character; when the main character position

actually shifted to someone else, we knew Cloud could go the same way as Aerith. It was a great way to shift up the narrative tension, and showed that our game characters were never safe. "I think it is the mystery that forms the basis of the story," says Kitase. "In RPG games the protagonist is an avatar of the player but I really like the conceit of having the identity and nature of that protagonist flipped on its head during the story."



before and after this vital moment and synchronise the timing of the music so that the most memorable part of the melody coincides with it. This linked sequencing and rhythm in the direction is what makes a scene dramatic."

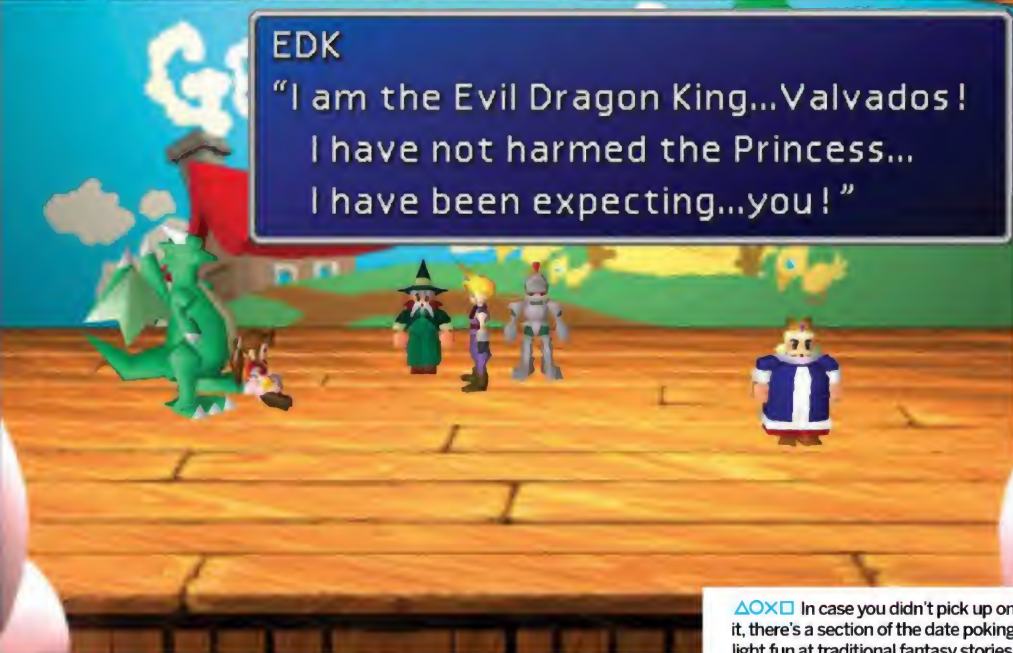
It was this drama, this full use of a videogame's interactive qualities to tell an engaging story in a way films just can't, that seeped into every aspect of *Final Fantasy VII* and made it so unforgettable. But in moving away from more traditional fantasy stories and telling something a little more realistic, at least at its core, *Final Fantasy VII* had to address how far it would still be a fantasy game. Calling it a "corruption" within the stories of games, Kitase tells us about how he felt gamers had gotten too used to seeing characters die and then be magically returned to life. "In the fantasy genre, there are many stories where characters who have died can be brought back with the power of magic: the princess who is awoken by a kiss from a prince, etc," he says. "These stories are also pretty common in games too. With this game we put a lid on that."

We ask about how important the realism was over the natural, fun escapism that games provide, and Kitase laughs. "That is a pretty difficult question! If we made it too much of a surreal story then people would view it as a story only aimed at children, but if we went too far in the other direction and tried to make it too realistic then it would lose the wonder and fantasy." It's easy for us as consumers to look at the game's phenomenal success and see that clearly the right directorial choice was made, but at the time there was very little else out there doing the same. Much like *The Last Of Us* and its focus on our relationships with each other complementing the sci-fi setting, *Final Fantasy VII* was concerned with telling a human story through science fiction. "From *FFVII* onwards, graphics have become more and more realistic so it is natural that our awareness of realism has increased compared to before. I think that the more you try to depict a completely realistic type of world, the more the fantastic elements shine in it," Kitase continues. "After all, isn't Sephiroth the



EDK

"I am the Evil Dragon King...Valvados!
I have not harmed the Princess...
I have been expecting...you!"



△×□ In case you didn't pick up on it, there's a section of the date poking light fun at traditional fantasy stories.

appealing character he is because he is exactly that kind of supernatural entity that exists in a realistic world?"

It's an idea more commonly associated with science fiction than fantasy; in fantasy we need to believe in realistic characters in a make-believe world, while in science-fiction, the world that's presented has to have at least some of its roots in something

of the planet from – initially, at least – an all too human corporation, and ultimately from a man driven insane by power.

We ask if Kitase's own fondness for science fiction was a strong influence on the project. "As far as I recall, our chief producer, Mr Sakaguchi, had already proposed the setting and atmosphere at the start of the project," says Kitase. "Essentially, players

"ESSENTIALLY, PLAYERS HAD STARTED TO GET BORED OF A CLASSIC FANTASY SETTING AROUND THAT TIME"

we can recognise, even if it's a far-fetched extrapolation. In *Final Fantasy VII*, the threat wasn't a one-dimensional conveniently evil villain with a set of mythological creatures in tow (highlighting the contrast even more between *Final Fantasy VII* and previous instalments, there's even a pretend fairytale play at the Gold Saucer, complete with mock damsels and dragons), but the destruction

had started to get bored of a classic fantasy setting around that time and *Final Fantasy* needed to undergo a big change too." With underlying themes of poverty, corruption, aliens, and terrifying experiments gone wrong, *FFVII* is a game with science fiction roots that are often glossed over in favour of its strong variety of characters, and recognisable elements like mogs and



TECHNOLOGY VS SPIRITUALITY

The duality of Final Fantasy VII

Despite its sci-fi setting and concerns, *Final Fantasy VII* is ultimately a story about people, their loves, lives and losses. Though we didn't choose it for our stand-out moment, there's no denying the impact that Aerith's death had for both individuals playing the game and the wider videogame landscape. "It is not a story of going to bring back a person who has died but a story about how those left behind keep the wishes of the deceased alive and ultimately fulfil them. That is the major theme of *FFVII*. It also tells of how the soul of the departed can be saved by doing this." The fact that this balance between sentimentality and purpose still has such a strong emotional impact on gamers nearly two decades on is testament to its strength.



chocobos. Even so, these influences are not only clear to see but ultimately are still relevant today. *FFVII* really wasn't afraid to mess with the player, at one point leaving the player-character Cloud in a state of befuddlement. "The mystery turns the construction of the RPG game back on itself and the catharsis at the end of the game when the truth is revealed is done brilliantly," says Kitase. It was this willingness to throw out the rule book that ensured *Final Fantasy VII* its place in classic PlayStation gaming.

There are so many elements of *Final Fantasy VII* that we can see now in other games that were intended to really shake up the genre and forge a new, exciting way of creating and playing RPGs. With the use of the realism of sci-fi, the whimsy of fantasy, and hefty inspiration from movies, *Final Fantasy VII* more than accomplished its main goal: to tell a story that makes people feel something. "I think that each person will take something different away with them," Kitase closes. "And I would be happy if they simply continued feeling whatever it was they did."

INTERVIEW

HUNTING SEASON

The Witcher 3 producer Stan Just on the trials and tribulations of creating the biggest RPG ever made

How has working with the new consoles been for you?

I wouldn't say that it has been easy. It has certainly been a challenge. The Xbox One and PS4 are new for us as designers and new for our engine, so we've had to adjust our engine to accommodate the hardware and make sure everything works as we intend it to.

Our engine is designed to be able to handle the next-gen systems, though. So we manage okay [laughs].

We used a lot of the multi-platform experience we gained from working on the 360 port of *The Witcher 2*, but many people

that have joined the studio since we released *The Witcher 2* have a lot of experience working on multi-platform games as well. We feel like we're prepared for the new consoles, yeah.

You added a tutorial in the 'Enhanced Edition' of *The Witcher 2*; has that made you think more closely about how you teach players the mechanics of *The Witcher 3*?

Definitely it has, yes. Last month the studio was dedicated specifically to tutorials, so we know that's something we need to include and it's something we've developed heavily. From the very start, as far as I'm concerned, the way we teach players has been vastly improved.

I was guilty of the opposite on *The Witcher 2*. I was too static when it came to talking about including a tutorial system.

Are there a lot of new things that returning players will need to learn?

I would say that the controls themselves have changed a little bit because the combat system has been revamped. Still, despite that, I think it will be rather easy for returning players to learn the new controls. I guess I would describe the combat as easy to learn and hard to master.

In the demo it was said that getting between the two places shown would take around 20 minutes on a sprinting horse...

Yeah, that's right.

Unfortunately, we haven't tasked anybody on the testing team to find out

"THE WORLD IN WILD HUNT IS IN POLITICAL TURMOIL – THERE'S A WAR GOING ON WHEN YOU START THE GAME"


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how long it would take to get across the entire world that we've built. For a start, you couldn't get across all of it just using a horse – at times you would have to climb a mountain and at other times you would have to sail a boat or dive through underwater passageways. It's huge, really. It's massive.

The mountain in the demo can be climbed in any number of ways. Do you need to handcraft environments to achieve this?

That's right, yeah. This is an open-world game, but we've refrained from procedural generation of our environments and the places within them. Each environment, each hut, each point of interest, everything has been handcrafted by our level designers so that every little detail fits the quests and the general approach we want to take with the world.

It requires a lot of work. At the same time, though, it provides a level of intensity for the player. We want to preserve the story-driven gameplay that we had in previous games, but we're in an open world and so it's harder to do that. The only option is to handcraft everything.

Has it been more difficult to tell an engaging story in the open-world setting?

Yeah, it's definitely difficult to do that. What's also difficult is to fill out the world with enough quests to do, while also making sure that those quests feel related to one another in some way. You have a lot of choices that you can make in the game, and they come in all shades of grey, so it's difficult for us to work out all the intricacies and the relationships between those decisions.

What you need to remember, though, is that the world in *Wild Hunt* is experiencing political turmoil – there's a war going on when you start the game. Even though you will stumble across a side quest at some point, it will be a side quest



that is grounded by that wider situation. A side quest about a force occupying a village might be a separate plot in itself and have a beginning and an end, but it's also a plot that is grounded within the bigger storyline and the war.

Designing things that way allows us to make sure the story is always being driven forward and informed by things that you are doing. These things are optional to do but if you do them you will find they are still part of the bigger picture.

So you're keeping away from what, in other games, can seem like distractions...

[Laughs] No, you won't be doing things like searching for feathers.

Now that *The Witcher* games are well established, do you still look much to the books for inspiration?

I would say that *Wild Hunt* is a very specific part of the series in that we have included a lot of characters from the books and a lot of plot lines that have been mentioned in the books. Some of those plots are continued in the game, so if you're a fan of the novels then you will hopefully be entertained when you explore that.

One plot might have ended in the books but in *Wild Hunt* we pick up from there and create a different plot from that point forward. So, even though this is a standalone story and a standalone game, the people that have read the novels and played the previous games will pick up on additional layers of depth here.

So you don't need to have played previous games to grasp the plot?

The first thing you need to know about this is: don't worry about it. Even newcomers to *The Witcher* will understand everything that is going on in the world, it is carefully explained to you. The most important events from previous plots will be

recapped, but there's really no need to worry as this is a standalone game in its own right.

Underwater sequences/swimming are new to *The Witcher 3*. Are these a 'big' thing? Do you need to perform much of this?

It might be a big thing for you, if you enjoy those underwater parts and exploring them. There's a lot of weird creatures living under the water and there are a lot of treasures and some quests that require you to spend time underwater. Some of the islands in the game force you to travel through water to get there and sometimes you will have to enter underwater areas to locate everything.



What are the key ingredients to making a fantasy world feel realistic?

Many developers of fantasy games do lose that element of believability to their worlds and characters. We try to be realistic in different ways and across different topics.

Sometimes you'll see someone in other games wearing a piece of armour that is just ridiculous; no one could ever wear it in real life and they certainly couldn't move around or do anything in it. For us, when we discuss armour we talk about everything... from where the belt should be placed, whether the armour is practical and useful, and, perhaps most importantly, does it look and behave like something Geralt would actually use? That also applies to all the different items and weapons.

Many of our initial designs change because of those discussions. We might decide that something we have is stupid and just doesn't fit into the world or relate to any kind of real life situation. There's a lot of effort put into getting that right.

EXTENDED PLAY

XCOM: ENEMY UNKNOWN

It may well have proved that a genre associated with mouse and keyboard can work effortlessly on console, but that doesn't mean XCOM should be consigned to its place in history. There are plenty of reasons to defend Earth all over again...



ENEMY WITHIN

■ SINCE XCOM: ENEMY *Unknown* first appeared on PS3, developer Firaxis has followed up with standalone expansion *Enemy Within*, providing a welcome excuse to go back for more of that wonderful, turn-based, strategic combat. In the expansion, you can spend some time battling rogue human faction EXALT as well as alien foes, but that's not really the appeal. Rather, *Enemy Within*'s allure is to be located in the new toys and abilities it gives you to play with and the new enemies and maps with which you'll be challenged.

Amongst the additions *Enemy Within* makes to *XCOM* is the inclusion of a new resource: Meld. Using this resource, it's possible to gain access to superhuman powers for

your loyal soldiers – including the ability to leap atop buildings and sense nearby hostiles. Even better, you can cybernetically enhance your operatives (the poor devils will lose the arms and legs they were born with, but cyber limbs are far better than those flimsy meat ones anyway) and place them in hulking mech-suits. That's a good job, given that one of the new enemy types introduced in the expansion is the wonderfully named Mechtoid – a Sectoid with a heavily armoured suit of its own. Add to all that a not insignificant 47 new maps (the original single-player campaign had 80) and you've got more than enough reasons to play some more *XCOM*.



IRONMAN

■ **IF YOU'VE ALREADY** completed *XCOM*'s campaign playing in its standard mode, then we think it's about time you really challenged yourself and go back for an Ironman run; for many, it's the way that the game is meant to be played. In Ironman, there's no reloading of saves if things go wrong; failure means failure. As a result, there's an extra weight lent to every choice that you make, knowing as you do that one mistake could set you on an irrevocable path to failure, dooming you to start the game again from scratch. If you have the commitment to keep coming back, the

patience to carefully consider each move and eventually succeed, though, it'll be all the more satisfying.

If you're particularly masochistic you could take on the ultimate challenge – Impossible Ironman, a combination of the game's hardest difficulty with Ironman enabled. To give you some idea of just how difficult that is, only 0.4 per cent of players have the Trophy for beating the game in Ironman mode on Classic or Impossible difficulty. Remove those who did it on Classic from the equation and we reckon you're looking at a very exclusive club.



CHOOSE YOUR OWN ADVENTURE

■ **ONE OF THE** best things about *XCOM* is the stories that you can create yourself, simply by virtue of how you choose to name your characters. Whether that be a case of building an unnaturally strong relationship with ridiculously named soldiers – we still fondly remember our facial-haired friend Moustachio Handlebariki – or drawing on your real-world relationships and seeing which friend you appear to unconsciously want dead, judging by the number of inadvisable risks you consistently take with them, there's so much fun to be

had playing with a set of soldiers that you've actually christened yourself.

If you've not yet tried playing through *XCOM* with a team named after your friends – do that. If you've already done so, try something a little more imaginative. Create a team based on your childhood heroes and hang your head in despair as you see *Art Attack*'s Neil Buchanan crumple into a lifeless heap. Or, smile with satisfaction as Descartes shotguns an alien in the face, leading your band of alien-hating philosophers to victory once again.



MULTIPLAYER

■ **MOST OF US** came to *XCOM* for the campaign and that's perfectly understandable, given that it's the best part of the game. That doesn't mean that multiplayer is undeserving of your attention though, or that you won't get a lot of enjoyment out of giving multiplayer a bash if you bypassed it first time around.

For those of you who're completely oblivious, *XCOM* multiplayer lets you take on the role of humans – in which case you'll get a points budget to spend on upgrading your squad – or the aliens. If the prospect of pitting your wits against a human player to see if you've got the tactical nous to defeat them isn't quite tempting enough, perhaps the idea of getting a go at controlling *XCOM*'s extraterrestrial contingent will tip the balance.

THE BLUFFER'S GUIDE TO FINAL FANTASY



Seifer

"Man... All they did was get in my way. Being a leader ain't easy."



WHAT IS IT?

■ **DESPITE NOT BEING** the first JRPG to market, Square's series is largely responsible for the global appeal of the genre. It might seem contradictory to have the word 'final' in the name of a series approaching its 15th numbered iteration, but the origins of the title make perfect sense – the original *Final Fantasy* on the NES was seen as a 'last chance' for both struggling studio Squaresoft and creator Hironobu Sakaguchi, who planned to quit the industry and return to university if the game didn't succeed. Fortunately it did, and Square proceeded to churn out five increasingly popular NES and SNES sequels in the space of seven years. It wasn't until the seventh game that the series truly went global, however, with *Final Fantasy's* PlayStation debut the first in the series to get a European release – boasting three discs crammed with audio tracks, 3D characters and pre-rendered cutscenes. *FFVII* was both a huge leap for the franchise and the first taste many would get of its unique blend of real-time and turn-based battle systems.



THE STORY SO FAR

■ **UNLIKE MOST NUMBERED** sequels, there's not really one overarching story to the *Final Fantasy* games. Each tends to be somewhat self-contained and while a few have been set in the same universe (*Tactics* and *Final Fantasy XII* are both set in Ivalice, for instance), the team has creative freedom to develop not just characters but the world and lore around them from scratch as they see fit for each new project. There's a wonderful sense of adventure and discovery thanks to this and while the series started off as pure fantasy (the

clue's in the title, really), sci-fi elements began to creep in from *FFVI* onwards and now, you never know what to expect. From flying schools and space stations in *FFVIII* to fabricated deities and inter-dimensional amusement parks in the frequently ludicrous *XIII* trilogy, Square is always ready with a curveball or two. One thing is pretty much always true, though – your hero each time will start out with a noble but relatively simple goal or task, which quickly escalates to saving the world from a far greater threat.



WHERE TO START

■ **THIS DEPENDS ON** a number of factors. The earlier games have mechanics that match their visuals in terms of simplicity, but the SNES games still hold up. If you're up for some classic RPG action, you can't go wrong with *FFVI*. Early 3D PlayStation visuals haven't aged nearly as well as the beautiful pixel art but if you can look beyond that, all three PSone *Final Fantasy* games are worth playing – *FFVII* is required reading for anyone that considers themselves an RPG fan, while debates will rage until the end of time over which of the trio is actually the best game (it's *VIII*, by the way).

If you can't go back to a time before voice acting and nice graphics, *FFX's* recent HD remaster is a cracking starting point for anyone looking for a traditional JRPG experience, while *FFXII's* dangerously complex Gambit system might make it more appealing for players who never really got on with the ATB battle system of previous games in the series. For all the hate they get, the *XIII* games are mechanically excellent as well, plus there are the two MMOs (*XI* and *XIV*) for people looking for something even further removed from JRPG standards.



ANY SPIN-OFFS?

■ **MORE THAN THERE** are main series games and no base is left uncovered, either. *Theatrhythm* is a rhythm-action game set to the series' best music; *Dissidia* is a one-on-one fighter starring every major *FF* character; *Tactics* is a strategy sub-series packed with references and cameos; the *Crystal*

Chronicles games are co-op action adventures. There are even racing games and roguelikes starring chocobos, while many *FF* heroes also appear as major characters in the *Kingdom Hearts* series and Cloud even appeared in PSone beat-'em-up *Ergheiz: God Bless The Ring*.



ANYTHING BESIDES GAMES?

■ **SO, SO MUCH.** Two CG movies in the form of *The Spirits Within* and *Advent Children*, more kinds of merchandise than you could ever hope to be able to afford or store (including the awesome Play Arts figure ranges) and some of the most incredible OST collections in all of gaming. If you're a fan of *Final Fantasy* music, do yourself a favour and look up The Black Mages – composer Nobuo Uematsu's own band took classic *FF* tunes and rocked them right the hell up, resulting in some simply incredible instrumental metal. Get involved.

WHO ARE THESE GUYS?



CLOUD STRIFE (FFVII)

This spiky-haired hero with a hazy memory is both the poster boy for the *Final Fantasy* franchise and the template for the stereotypical modern JRPG protagonist. You spend most of the game trying to decipher his memories to work out how much is real and who he really is, which is cool. His sword is bigger than he is.



SQUALL LEONHART (FFVIII)

While Cloud might start off a little cocky and arrogant, Squall is pretty much just a grumpy dick when you first meet him in Balamb Garden. Still, his evolution to full-on hero by the end of the fourth (!) disc is superb, so he kind of needs that shaky start to really show how far he has come. His sword is also a gun.



TIDUS (FFX)

As the first voiced *FF* lead, Tidus is a love/hate character for many series fans. That laughing scene aside, most of his voice acting isn't that bad to be fair. Square bucked the usual trend and made him an out-of-place celebrity rather than an unlikely hero – riches to rags, if you will. His sword appears to be made out of water, somehow.



CLAIRE 'LIGHTNING' FARRON (FFXIII)

Designed to basically be the female equivalent of Cloud, Lightning is a stoic breath of fresh air amid a cast of whiners. She's very much the new face of the franchise and Square will literally put her in anything these days. Her sword is... well, she has lots of swords, and each is fancier than the last.

TROPHY GUIDE

PS PLUS TROPHY GUIDE

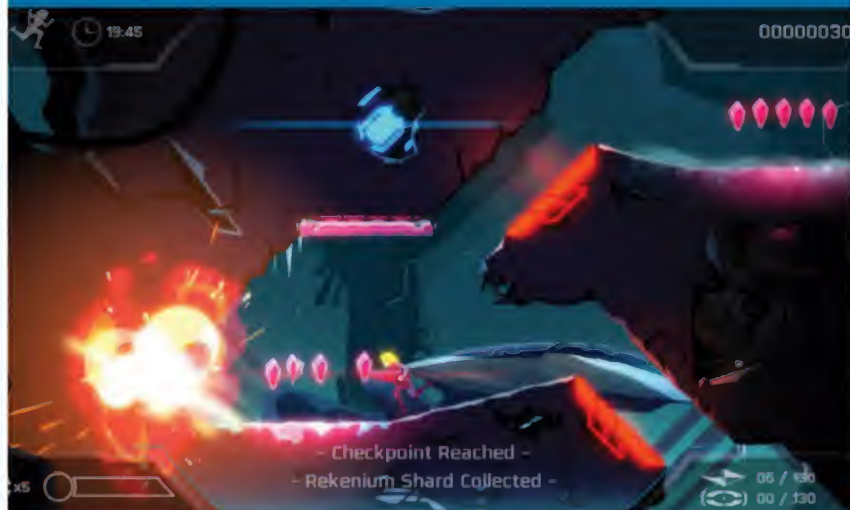


VELOCITY 2X

PLATFORM: PS4/VITA DIFFICULTY: 3/5

TROPHIES: 36 1 5 10 20

■ **THE SEQUEL TO** the popular shooter brings more of the same – Trophy-wise as well as gameplay – so if you've played the original you'll know what to aim for here. First, just complete the game – it'll get you used to the mechanics before aiming for those perfect runs, which is necessary for the Platinum. To get a 'Perfect' score you'll need to collect every survivor, every crystal, finish within the gold time limit and achieve the required score – and you'll need to do it without dying. Elsewhere, the Trophy 'Snooze You Lose' requires you to die by being crushed by a timed door in the platforming sections; the earliest you can collect this is level 29. 'Double Dash' can be accessed in later levels where you can find two guards in the platforming section to dash through at the same time. Lastly there's 'Triple Whammy 2X', where you need to hit three switches within one second – it's easy enough to do, but you need to keep an eye out for the right opportunity (such as level 21).



SPORTSFRIENDS

PLATFORM: PS4 DIFFICULTY: 1/5

TROPHIES: 14 0 1 0 13

■ **NO PLATINUM AND** very grindy Trophies might not make *Sportsfriends* seem worth the effort, but it's a great local multiplayer game. Some Trophies require changing the system date to unlock them such as 'Switched On Joust', which requires playing a game of JS Joust every day of the week, or 'Feliz Aniversário', which requires you to play Hokra on Rio as Brazil on 10 July. 'Backerfriendsforever' requires you to sit through the list of Kickstarter backers without skipping, a mundane task but it can be sped up by pushing down on the left stick. Or there's 'Got On Top', which can only be unlocked on the hidden game 'Get On Top' (which, itself, is unlocked by entering Up, Right, Down, Left, Up, Right, Down, Left, X on the main menu). Play this game in a single sitting until there are 1,000 victories (or simply tape down the left stick pushing left) and the Trophy will be yours.

PLAYSTATION ALL-STARS BATTLE ROYALE

PLATFORM: PS3 DIFFICULTY: 2/5

TROPHIES: 55 1 1 8 45

■ **MANY OF THE** Trophies in *PlayStation All-Stars* can be unlocked playing in single-player, or in CPU battles outside of the main campaign. You'll need to complete the story as every character, of course, which will help with understanding the gameplay mechanics a little. There are some online Trophies that will be quite awkward to get without boosting, so knowing which are the best characters (and how to play against others) will be important. For other Trophies like '3x OVERTIME!!' you can use an Offline Versus game against three AI opponents and just avoid dying until the second Overtime kicks in. You'll be able to use this opportunity to unlock 'Champion', too, for winning a game against three AI opponents on the same team. The two combo Trophies 'Combo King' and 'Combo Virtuoso' can be unlocked when playing as Ratchet in Practice Mode, using the combo Right + Square, Up + Square and then Up + Triangle. There aren't many more that'll prove tricky, that aren't online-only anyway.





HOARD

PLATFORM: PS3 DIFFICULTY: 3/5
TROPHIES: 11 0 2 0 9

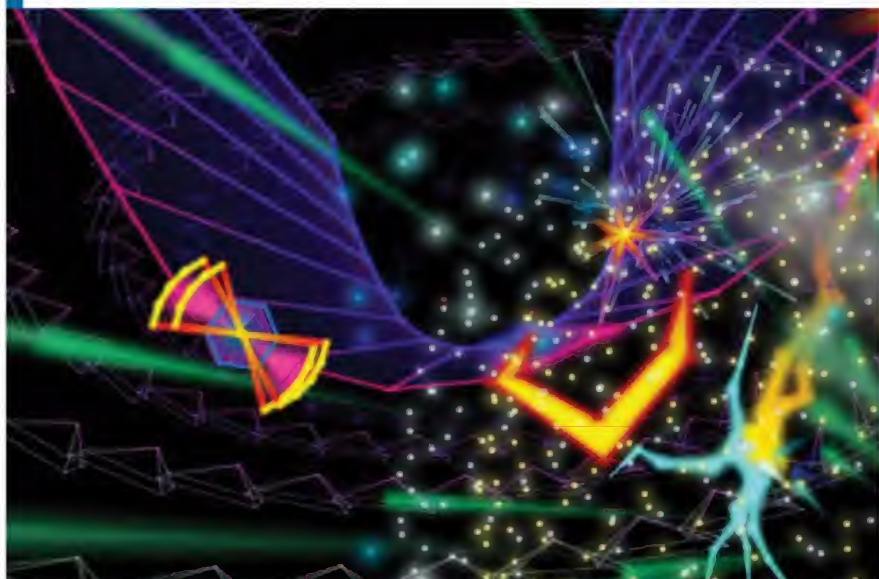
■ **HOARD'S TROPHIES** ARE a meagre batch. Just over half are devoted to playing until you reach a certain rank (the last of which is at level 15), while the rest require you to collect in-game medals – which are awarded for particular actions. There are a fair amount of awards to collect but while you only need 90 per cent of them, some of them will take a good old time to unlock. You'll get many just for playing the game a bunch of times, but there are ones that require killing 750 archers, knights and thieves, destroying 1,000 wagons, 100 castles, towns and taverns and the like. There aren't really any tips to provide here except to say that, if you are interested in getting 100 per cent for this, then play a few games to see what kind of medals you get the most and then grind these until you've ticked off most of them in the Rewards section. It's a tedious Trophy list, to be sure, and one that probably isn't worth the effort.



TxK

PLATFORM: VITA DIFFICULTY: 5/5
TROPHIES: 10 0 1 4 5

■ **FIRST, A WARNING:** a known glitch will prevent you being able to get 100 per cent on this quirky retro shoot-'em-up, since if you do manage to complete Pure Mode or Survival Mode you won't get a Trophy for it. Currently no one has unlocked these Trophies, confirming the fact that they are in fact bugged – and though a patch may resolve this problem, it's been a while since the game's release so we wouldn't get your hopes up. Otherwise, the Trophy list is fairly typical, albeit also pretty tough too. That's mostly down to 'Pure skill', which requires you to complete levels 1-33 without dying – a task that can only really be completed with incessant practice and memorising of each stage. Certainly download TxK for a quick go, but it's best avoided if you're only in it for the Trophies.



JOE DANGER

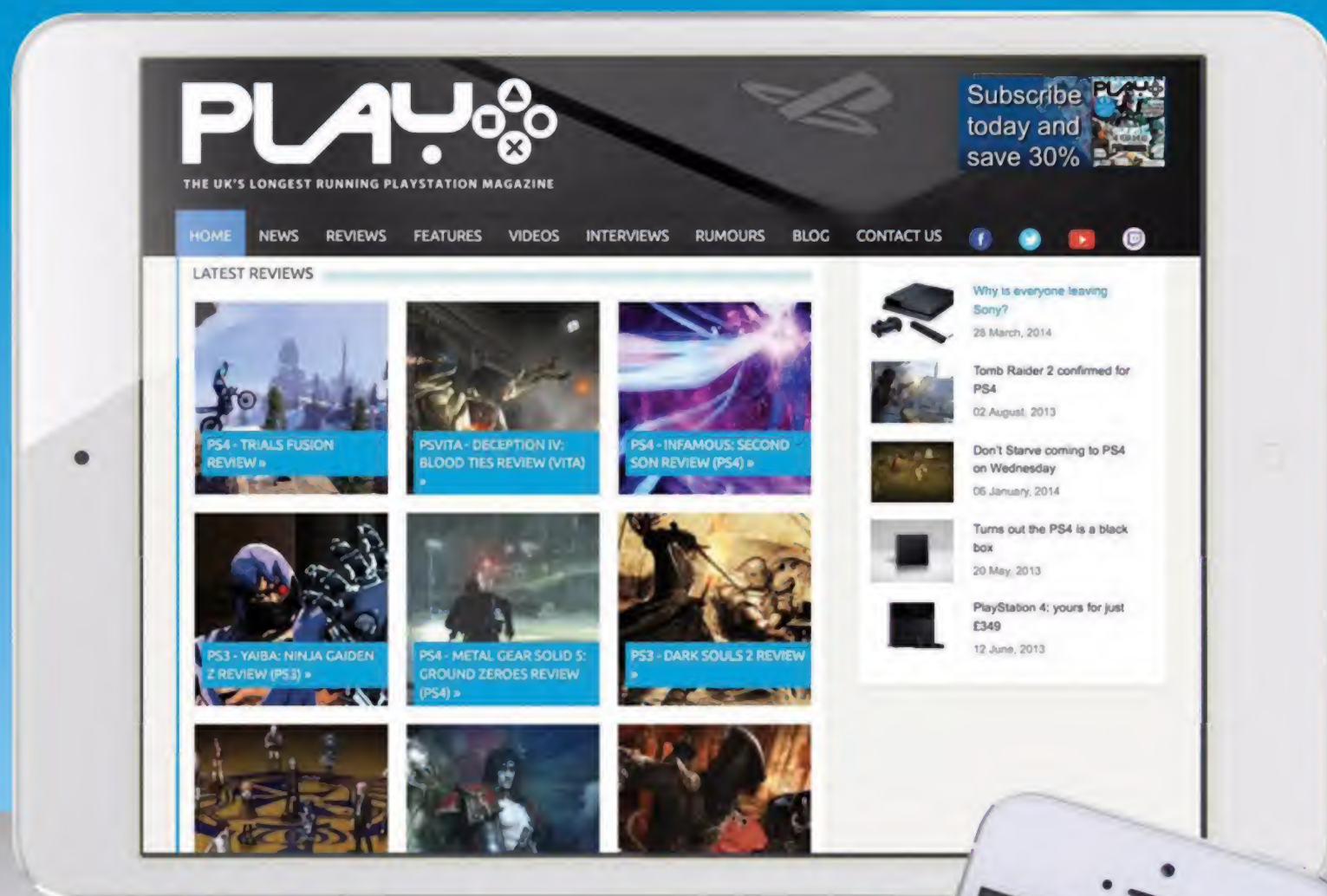
PLATFORM: VITA DIFFICULTY: 2/5
TROPHIES: 16 0 0 4 12

■ **FOR AS FUN** as *Joe Danger* is, sadly its Trophies aren't quite that compelling. Most of them are associated with things you'll likely be doing anyway (collecting stars, fully completing stages and the like), and this is especially true since to get 100 per cent you'll also need 'MASTER OF DISASTER!' for completing every star on every stage. You'll also need a friend to play *Joe Danger* so you can share a created level and play their created level for the related Trophies. There is one tricky one in 'MEGA COMBO!', which requires you to get a 100x combo – the solution is simple, though: create your own level that is just a long, flat track and switch between ollies and wheelies until you reach that 100 combo goal. Easy peasy.

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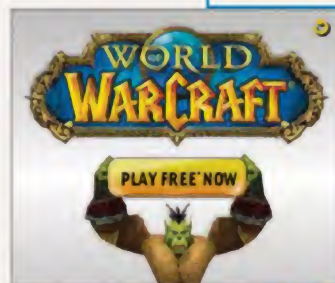
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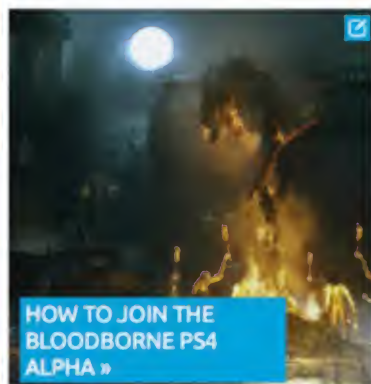
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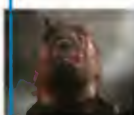
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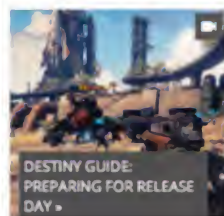
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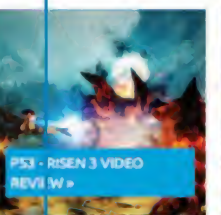


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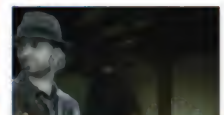
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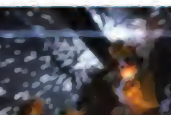
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THERE ARE LOADS of exciting games coming to PS4 over the next year. We take a look at some of the highlights.

ASSASSIN'S CREED: UNITY



NO BOATS? WE have a chat about whether that'll be a problem.

ROGUE LEGACY



FIND OUT WHY this is essential (and why you'll never get the Platinum) in our review.

RISEN 3: TITAN LORDS



ALL WE'LL SAY about this video review is that... we've got some things to say.

THE ORDER: 1886



MY, OH MY does this game look impressive. Come have a butchers, why don't you?

CALL OF DUTY: ADVANCED WARFARE



COD'S GOING ALL futuristic, but does that mean it'll be original?

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TLOU TROPHY GUIDE

No doubt you've played *The Last Of Us* by now. Our Trophy Guide will walk you through every Trophy on your way to that Platinum. Pick it up from www.greatdigitalmags.com.



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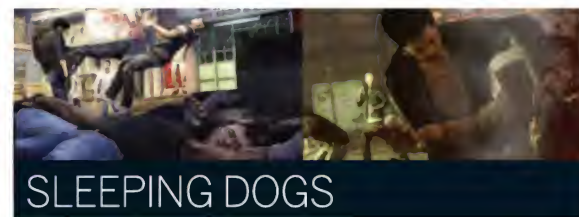
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The game changes each time, and the best players will win prizes – free games, or just some of the other tat around our office. Come and join in the fun next time and you could win something neat.



VELOCITY 2X

This excellent, exhilarating 2D shooter is a game that shows that developer FuturLab didn't run out of ideas with the first game. Join as we try to fly, run and shoot our way to as many Perfect ranks as we can. Note that we said "try"...



SLEEPING DOGS

It gets a bit of a hard time from some people, but we're big fans of *Sleeping Dogs*. We're not so sure whether we're keen on the idea of a definitive edition, but we're going to give it a try, so come and join us, ask questions and we'll let you know what we think.

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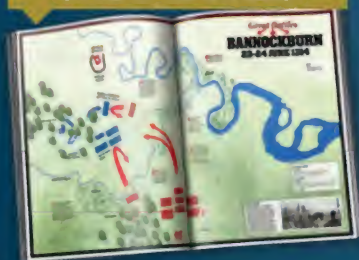
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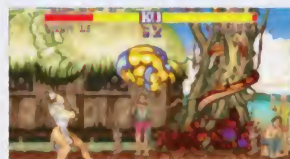


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TEAM PICKS SOUNDTRACKS



top five LUKE ALBIGÉS

- 1 Street Fighter II
- 2 Final Fantasy VII
- 3 Castlevania: Symphony Of The Night
- 4 Fez
- 5 Gitaroo Man



top five LIAM WARR

- 1 Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2004
- 2 Tony Hawk's Pro Skater
- 3 Burnout Takedown
- 4 Grand Theft Auto: Vice City
- 5 Back To The Future: It's About Time



top five STEVE HOLMES

- 1 Deus Ex: Human Revolution
- 2 The Last Of Us
- 3 Hotline Miami
- 4 The Wolf Among Us
- 5 Grand Theft Auto: Vice City



top five PAUL WALKER-EMIG

- 1 Hotline Miami
- 2 Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2
- 3 Final Fantasy VII
- 4 Tearaway
- 5 Persona 4 Golden

PS4 LISTING



GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
Assassin's Creed IV: Black Flag	237	83%
Battlefield 4	238	80%
Bound By Flame	245	62%
Call Of Duty: Ghosts	238	75%
Child Of Light	244	79%
CounterSpy	248	50%
Daylight	245	20%
Dead Nation: Apocalypse Edition	242	74%
Diablo III: Reaper Of Souls	248	92%
Don't Starve	240	81%
Dynasty Warriors 8 Xtreme Legends Complete Edition	243	80%
EA Sports UFC	246	75%
Fez	243	95%
Final Fantasy XIV: A Realm Reborn	243	85%
Hohokum	248	80%
inFamous: Second Son	242	86%
Killzone Shadow Fall	238	80%
Killzone Shadow Fall: Intercept	246	84%
Knack	238	55%
Lego Marvel Super Heroes	238	85%
Lego The Hobbit	244	65%
Mercenary Kings	244	85%
Metal Gear Solid V: Ground Zeroes	242	85%
Murdered: Soul Suspect	246	48%
Need For Speed Rivals	238	83%
Octodad: Dadliest Catch	244	60%
Plants Vs Zombies: Garden Warfare	248	71%
Outlast	241	73%
Resogun	238	91%




An addictive and accomplished shoot-'em-up, *Resogun* is an indie delight and a surprise PS4 launch highlight. Awesome stuff.

Resogun Heroes	247	93%
Rogue Legacy	248	91%
Skylanders Swap Force	238	77%
Sniper Elite III	246	72%
The Amazing Spider-Man 2	245	25%
The Last Of Us Remastered	247	94%
Thief	241	70%
Tiny Brains	240	68%
Transistor	245	87%
Transformers: Rise Of The Dark Spark	247	30%
Trials Fusion	244	80%
Valiant Hearts	247	64%
War Thunder	239	80%
Watch Dogs	245	80%
Wolfenstein: The New Order	245	78%

PS3 LISTING



007 Legends	225	44%
194 2: Joint Strike	170	74%
2014 FIFA World Cup Brazil	244	69%
3D Dot Game Heroes	192	87%
50 Cent: Blood On The Sand	177	70%
Ace Combat: Assault Horizon	211	78%
The Adventures Of Tintin	212	58%
Afro Samurai	177	61%
After Burner Climax	193	91%
Agarest: Generations Of War	187	78%
Agarest: Generations Of War 2	223	43%
Agarest: Generations Of War Zero	209	52%
Age Of Booty	172	81%
Air Conflicts: Secret Wars	208	58%
Alice: Madness Returns	207	57%
Alien Breed: Impact	196	80%
Alien Breed 2: Assault	201	82%
Alien Breed 3: Descent	204	61%


GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
Aliens: Colonial Marines	230	45%
Aliens Vs Predator	189	79%
All Zombies Must Die!	214	64%
Alone In The Dark	173	70%
Alpha Protocol	193	83%
Amy	215	19%
Anarchy: Rush Hour	194	73%
Ape Escape	208	55%
Aquapazza: Aquaplus Dream Match	239	70%
Aqua Panic	193	68%
Arcana Heart 3	207	79%
Armageddon Riders	207	65%
Armored Core: For Answer	173	65%
Armored Core 4	153	67%
Armored Core V	217	60%
Army Of Two	164	80%
Army Of Two: The 40th Day	188	65%
Army Of Two: The Devil's Cartel	231	44%
Ar Tonelico Qoga: Knell Of Ar Ciel	203	27%
Assassin's Creed	161	58%
Assassin's Creed II	186	89%
Assassin's Creed III	225	78%
Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood	199	91%
Assassin's Creed: Revelations	212	75%
Asura's Wrath	216	67%
Atelier Ayesha: The Alchemist Of Dust	230	60%
Atelier Rorona: The Alchemist Of Arland	198	77%
Backbreaker	193	70%
Back To The Future: It's About Time	204	71%
The Baoning	210	72%
Band Hero	187	68%
Batman: Arkham Asylum	183	85%
Batman: Arkham City	211	94%
Batman: Arkham Origins	237	85%
Battle Fantasia	176	67%
Battlefield 1943	182	89%
Battlefield: Bad Company	168	78%
Battlefield: Bad Company 2	190	93%
Battlefield 3	212	88%
Battleship	219	44%
Bayonetta*	187	93%
The Beatles: Rock Band	184	96%
Beat Hazard Ultra	213	79%
Beat Sketcher	201	85%
Beyond Good & Evil HD	207	86%
Beyond: Two Souls	236	70%
Binary Domain	216	70%
Bionic Commando	179	82%
Bionic Commando Rearmed	169	88%
Bionic Commando Rearmed 2	203	61%
BioShock	172	93%
BioShock 2	189	88%
BioShock Infinite	230	97%
Birds Of Steel	217	55%
BlackSite	163	43%
Blade Kitten	197	72%
Bladestorm: The Hundred Years' War	160	58%
Blast Factor	152	72%
BlazBlue: Calamity Trigger	190	85%
BlazBlue: Continuum Shift	198	94%
Blazing Angels	151	54%
Bleach: Soul Resurrección	209	63%
Blitz: The League II	172	67%
Blokus	202	54%
BloodRayne: Betrayal	211	62%
Blur	193	86%
Bodycount	210	54%
Bombberman Ultra	185	82%
Borderlands	185	80%
Borderlands 2	223	90%
 Borderlands 2 is an excellent lesson in sequel-making and is easily one of 2012's best games.		
The Bourne Conspiracy	168	72%
Braid	188	93%
Brink	206	67%
Brothers: A Tale Of Two Sons	233	83%
Brothers In Arms: Hell's Highway	171	75%

GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
Brütal Legend	185	79%
Bulletstorm	203	86%
The Bureau: XCOM Declassified	235	57%
Burnout Crash	211	79%
Burnout Paradise	162	74%
Burn Zombie Burn	178	85%
Buzz! Quiz TV	168	82%
Buzz! Quiz World	185	70%
Calling All Cars	155	81%
Call Of Duty 3	151	77%
Call Of Duty: World At War	173	68%
Call Of Duty 4: Modern Warfare	160	88%
Call Of Duty: Modern Warfare 2	186	94%
Call Of Duty: Modern Warfare 3	212	88%
Call Of Duty: Black Ops	199	94%
Call Of Duty: Black Ops II	226	80%
Call Of Juarez: Bound In Blood	181	85%
Call Of Juarez: Gunslinger	232	80%
Call Of Juarez: The Cartel	208	30%
Captain America: Super Soldier	208	70%
Castle Crashers	200	88%
Castlevania: Harmony Of Despair	212	67%
Castlevania: Lords Of Shadow	197	85%
Castlevania: Lords Of Shadow 2	241	81%
Carnival Island	213	53%
Catan	195	85%
Cars 2	208	68%
The Cave	230	77%
Catherine	215	61%
Champion Jockey	210	50%
Chronicles Of Riddick: Assault On Dark Athena	178	87%
Child Of Eden	211	80%
Chime Super Deluxe	203	80%
Civilization Revolution	168	90%
Clash Of The Titans	193	65%
Clive Barker's Jericho	159	84%
The Club	163	80%
Colin McRae: DiRT	158	91%
Colin McRae: DiRT 2	184	87%
Command & Conquer: Red Alert 3	178	65%
Commander's Challenge	185	68%
Command & Conquer	175	44%
Comet Crash	186	84%
Comix Zone	210	62%
Conan	160	71%
Condemned 2	165	78%
Costume Quest	199	70%
Conflict: Denied Ops	164	50%
Counter Strike: Global Offensive	223	89%
Crash Commando	174	80%
Crash Time 4: The Syndicate	218	37%
Crazy Machines Elements	210	71%
Create	199	71%
Critter Crunch	188	91%
Cross Edge	182	59%
Crystal Defenders	184	48%
Crysis 2	204	72%
Crysis 3	230	61%
Cubixx HD	207	76%
The Cursed Crusade	211	40%
Damnation	181	38%
Damage Inc: Pacific Squadron WWII	223	37%
Dance Dance Revolution	201	52%
Dante's Inferno	189	80%
Dark Mist	164	53%
The Darkness	154	91%
The Darkness II	215	76%
Dark Sector	165	62%
Dark Souls	211	90%
Dark Souls II	242	90%
Darkstalkers Resurrection	230	82%
Dark Void	188	81%
Darksiders	188	83%
Darksiders II	221	86%
DC Universe Online	202	80%
de Blob 2	203	65%
Dead Or Alive 5	223	78%
Dead Island	210	79%

THIS MONTH'S NEW ENTRIES

The newest games, freshly
squeezed among all your
old favourites

Diablo III: Reaper Of Souls	92%
Plants Vs Zombies: Garden Warfare	71%
Hohokum	80%
Rogue Legacy	91%
CounterSpy	50%
Risen 3: Titan Lords	25%

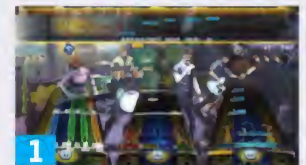
GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
Dead Island: Riptide	231	65%
Dead Rising 2	197	78%
Dead Rising 2: Off The Record	211	61%
Dead Space	172	87%
Dead Space 2	201	92%
Dead Space 3	228	70%
Dead Space: Extraction	203	88%
Dead Space: Ignition	199	47%
Dead To Rights: Retribution	192	68%
Deadly Premonition: The Director's Cut	231	82%
Dead Nation	201	86%
Deadpool	233	60%
DeathSpank	195	83%
Def Jam: Icon	151	79%
Def Jam Rapstar	199	72%
Defiance	231	50%
Demon's Souls	193	92%
Destroy All Humans!: Path Of The Furon	178	29%
Derrick The Deathfin	227	79%
Deus Ex: Human Revolution	209	91%
Devil May Cry 4	163	89%
Devil May Cry HD Collection	217	80%
Diablo III	235	89%
DiRT 3	206	85%
DiRT Showdown	219	84%
Disgaea 3: Absence Of Justice	175	81%
Dishonored	224	92%
Disney Infinity	235	81%
DJ Hero	186	91%
DJ Hero 2	198	88%
Doctor Who: The Eternity Clock	220	32%
Doom 3: BFG Edition	225	69%
Double Dragon Neon	224	37%
DmC Devil May Cry	227	93%
 <p>DmC injects new life into one of the best genres in all of gaming, and does so with a style and confidence that elevates it beyond its roots.</p>		
Dragon Age: Origins	186	82%
Dragon Age II	203	86%
Dragon Ball: Raging Blast	186	40%
Dragon Ball Z: Burst Limit	168	61%
Dragon's Crown	235	87%
Driver: San Francisco	209	68%
Droplitz	184	91%
Duke Nukem Forever	207	33%
D&D: Chronicles Of Mystara	233	80%
Dungeon Siege III	206	80%
Dust 514	233	51%
Dynasty Warriors: Gundam	160	40%
Dynasty Warriors: Gundam 2	176	43%
Dynasty Warriors: Gundam 3	208	56%
Dynasty Warriors: Strikeforce	189	37%
Dynasty Warriors 6	164	30%
Dynasty Warriors 6: Empires	181	44%
Dynasty Warriors 7	204	32%
Dynasty Warriors 7: Empires	230	40%
Dynasty Warriors 8	234	71%
Earthworm Jim HD	196	89%
EA Sports Active 2	200	81%
EA Sports Grand Slam Tennis	215	75%
EA Sports MMA	198	89%
Eat Lead	178	38%
Eat Them!	202	60%
echochrome	169	85%
echochrome II	202	83%
EDF: Insect Armageddon	208	64%
The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion	152	91%
The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim	212	93%
Elefunk	170	45%
El Shaddai: Ascension Of The Metatron	208	77%
Enchanted Arms	152	69%
Enemy Territory: Quake Wars	168	60%
Enslaved: Odyssey To The West	197	83%
Epic Mickey 2: The Power Of Two	226	55%
Eternal Sonata	176	87%
Euforia	212	85%
Everybody's Golf 5	158	88%
Everybody's Golf: World Tour	165	91%

GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
Explodemon	203	70%
Eye Of Judgment	159	65%
EyePet	185	83%
F1 2010	197	86%
F1 2011	211	71%
F1 2012	223	79%
F1 Race Stars	226	61%
FaceBreaker	170	55%
Fallout 3	173	97%
Fallout: New Vegas	198	88%
Family Guy: Back To The Multiverse	227	40%
Fantastic Four: Rise Of The Silver Surfer	155	39%
Far Cry 2	172	74%
Far Cry 3	226	88%
Far Cry 3: Blood Dragon	231	85%
Fat Princess	183	65%
Fatal Inertia EX	168	65%
FEAR	151	81%
FEAR 2: Project Origin	176	87%
FEAR 3	208	60%
FIFA 11	197	91%
FIFA 12	210	86%
FIFA 13	223	82%
FIFA 14	236	90%
FIFA Street (2012)	217	74%
FIFA Street 3	163	66%
Final Fight: Double Impact	193	90%
The Fight	199	42%
Fight Night Champion	203	88%
Fight Night Round 3	151	87%
Fight Night Round 4	181	84%
Final Fantasy XIV: A Realm Reborn	236	81%
Final Fantasy XIII	190	85%
Final Fantasy XIII-2	214	80%
Final Fantasy XIII: Lightning Returns	240	80%
Fist Of The North Star: Ken's Rage	198	51%
Fist Of The North Star: Ken's Rage 2	230	58%
Flight Control HD	198	85%
Flock!	179	70%
Folklore	158	66%
Formula One Championship Edition	151	72%
Front Mission Evolved	198	52%
Frogger: Hyper Arcade Edition	221	55%
From Dust	211	82%
Fuel	180	49%
Full Auto 2: Battlegrounds	151	69%
Fuse	232	73%
Game Of Thrones	220	39%
Gatling Gears	207	62%
Genji: Days Of The Blade	151	38%
Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2	157	83%
Ghost Recon Future Soldier	219	60%
Ghostbusters: The Videogame	180	80%
GI Joe	183	22%
The Godfather	151	37%
The Godfather II	178	38%
God Of War III	190	88%
God Of War: Ascension	230	90%
 <p>With brilliantly reworked combat mechanics and stunning graphics, Ascension is a gloriously violent prequel to the series.</p>		
God Of War Collection*	188	93%
God Of War Collection: Volume II	210	70%
The Golden Compass	162	32%
GoldenEye 007: Reloaded	213	63%
Gotham City Imposters	216	78%
Gran Turismo 5	200	85%
Gran Turismo 6	239	83%
Grand Theft Auto IV	166	98%
Grand Theft Auto V	236	97%
 <p>Rockstar's latest is a masterpiece: the perfect swansong for the generation and a wonderful addition to the franchise.</p>		
Greed Corp	191	75%
Green Day: Rock Band	194	77%
Greg Hastings Paintball 2	219	22%
Grid 2	232	79%
Grid Autosport	246	67%

GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
GTI Club+	174	72%
GTA: Episodes From Liberty City	191	94%
Guardians Of Middle-earth	227	71%
Guitar Hero III	160	90%
Guitar Hero 5	184	81%
Guitar Hero: Aerosmith	168	63%
Guitar Hero Greatest Hits	182	76%
Guitar Hero Metallica	179	88%
Guitar Hero: Van Halen	189	65%
Guitar Hero: Warriors Of Rock	197	71%
Guitar Hero World Tour	173	95%
Gundemonium Collection	197	80%
Gunstar Heroes	181	85%
Hamsterball	194	72%
Harry Potter And The Half-Blood Prince	182	60%
Harry Potter And The Order Of The Phoenix	155	32%
Haze	167	64%
Heavenly Sword	157	71%
Heavy Rain	189	94%
Heavy Weapon	187	75%
Heroes Over Europe	184	48%
Hitman: Absolution	225	93%
Hitman HD Trilogy	230	75%
Homefront	203	69%
The House Of The Dead 4	218	82%
The House Of The Dead: Overkill	212	75%
Hunted: The Demon's Forge	207	59%
Hustle Kings	190	87%
Hyperdimension Neptunia	202	21%
I Am Alive	217	64%
Ico & Shadow Of The Colossus HD	210	94%
IL-2 Sturmovik: Birds Of Prey	183	72%
The Incredible Hulk	168	52%
Infamous	180	81%
Infamous 2	207	83%
Inferno Pool	181	81%
Injustice: Gods Among Us	231	80%
Inversion	220	49%
Invincible Tiger: The Legend Of Han Tao	185	70%
Iron Man	166	58%
Iron Man 2	193	50%
The Jak And Daxter Trilogy	216	82%
Jak And Daxter: The Lost Frontier	187	59%
James Bond 007: Blood Stone	199	63%
James Cameron's Avatar: The Game	187	64%
JASF: Jane's Advanced Strike Fighters	217	30%
JoJo's Bizarre Adventure: All Star Battle	244	80%
Journey	216	87%
Juiced 2: Hot Import Nights	159	78%
Jurassic Park: The Game	194	60%
Just Cause 2	190	87%
Kane & Lynch: Dead Men	160	73%
Kane & Lynch 2: Dog Days	196	71%
Katamari Forever	184	88%
Kick-Ass The Game	194	60%
Killer Is Dead	235	75%
Killzone HD	225	65%
Killzone 2	176	93%
Killzone 3	202	80%
Kingdom Hearts HD 1.5 ReMIX	236	80%
Kingdoms Of Amalur: Reckoning	215	70%
The King Of Fighters XII	182	82%
The King Of Fighters XIII	213	76%
Knights Contract	202	53%
Kung-Fu Live	201	42%
Kung Fu Panda 2	207	20%
Kung Fu Rider	196	65%
Lair	158	52%
Landit Bandit	195	66%
LA Noire	206	91%
Lara Croft And The Guardian Of Light	198	90%
The Last Guy	171	91%
Last Rebellion	191	42%
Lead And Gold: Gangs Of The Wild West	193	65%
Legend Of Spyro: Dawn Of The Dragon	174	54%
Legendary	173	62%
Lego Batman	173	65%
Lego Batman 2	221	80%

*denotes import review

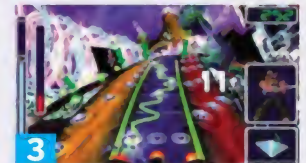
TOP TEN RHYTHM-ACTION GAMES



1 Rock Band 3



2 PaRappa The Rapper



3 Amplitude



4 Gitaroo Man



5 Guitar Hero 2



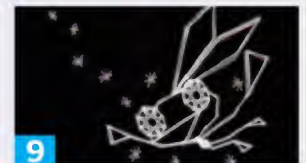
6 Hatsune Miku: Project Diva F



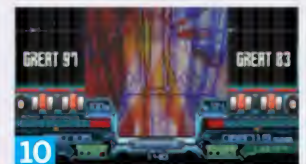
7 DDRMAX2



8 Rock Band Blitz



9 Vib-Ribbon



10 Beatmania IIDX

PLAY'S BEST GAMES IF YOU LOVE...



TOMMY COOPER

PLAY: FEZ

Though not the main feature of the game, *Fez*'s protagonist does wear a fez. *Fez* is a lovely looking game that's almost divided into two parts: perspective shifting platforming and brain-breaking secret hunting.



BASTION

PLAY: TRANSISTOR

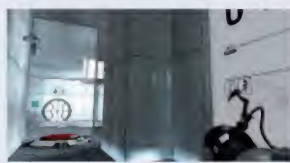
While anyone who has played *Bastion* can trace some key threads from that title into *Transistor*, that doesn't harm the game – it plays on Supergiant's strengths while also introducing some new ideas of its own.



GRAPHS

PLAY: METRICO

Graphs and numbers might not seem exciting, but give *Metrico* a chance. In this platformer, you can mould the world around you by paying attention to how your actions affect it.



BRILLIANT GAMES

PLAY: THE ORANGE BOX

Have you played *The Orange Box*? No! Do you hate good games or something? *Half-Life 2*, *Half-Life 2: Episode One* and *Episode Two*, *Portal* and *Team Fortress 2* in one package – what more do you want?!



NOT STARVING

PLAY: DON'T STARVE

Be prepared to fail in this brilliant but brutal survival game. Much of the fun in *Don't Starve* comes from learning from death.

GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
Lego Harry Potter: Years 1-4	194	79%
Lego Harry Potter: Years 5-7	213	67%
Lego Indiana Jones: The Original Adventures	167	73%
Lego Indiana Jones 2: The Adventure Continues	187	71%
Lego Pirates Of The Caribbean	206	76%
Lego Rock Band	187	75%
Lego Star Wars: The Complete Saga	160	76%
Lego Star Wars III: The Clone Wars	204	79%
Lego: The Lord Of The Rings	227	85%
Leisure Suit Larry: Box Office Bust	180	24%
Limbo	209	90%
LittleBigPlanet	172	94%
LittleBigPlanet 2	201	96%
LittleBigPlanet: Karting	225	85%
LocoRoco Cocoreccho!	159	80%
Lollipop Chainsaw	221	72%
London 2012	221	45%
The Lord Of The Rings: Aragorn's Quest	199	60%
The Lord Of The Rings: Conquest	175	52%
The Lord Of The Rings: War In The North	213	42%
Lost Planet 2	192	75%
Lost Planet 3	236	58%
Lost Planet: Extreme Condition	163	69%
Lost: The Video Game	164	38%
Lumines Supernova	178	90%
Madagascar 3	224	39%
Madden NFL 12	209	85%
Madden NFL 13	223	86%
Madden NFL Arcade	188	58%
Mad Riders	220	70%
Mafia II	196	81%
MAG	189	68%
Magic: Duels Of The Planeswalker	202	84%
Magic: Duels Of The Planeswalker 2012	208	70%
Majin And The Forsaken Kingdom	199	72%
Marvel Vs Capcom 2	182	90%
Marvel Vs Capcom 3	202	88%
Marvel Ultimate Alliance	151	64%
Marvel Ultimate Alliance 2	185	57%
Max Payne 3	219	77%
Mass Effect 2	201	97%
Mass Effect 3	216	93%
Medal Of Honor	198	86%
Medal Of Honor Airborne	161	85%
Medal Of Honor: Warfighter	225	72%
Mega Man 9	172	75%
Mega Man 10	192	82%
Mercenaries 2: World In Flames	171	78%
Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance	228	91%
<p><i>Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance</i> is another world-class entry in gaming's most fundamentally playable genre.</p>		
Metal Gear Solid 4	167	92%
Metal Gear Solid HD Collection	214	91%
Metro: Last Light	231	60%
Michael Jackson: The Experience	205	58%
Microbot	202	51%
Midnight Club: Los Angeles	173	84%
Mindjack	202	38%
Minecraft	240	93%
Mini Ninjas	184	80%
Mirror's Edge	173	71%
MLB: The Show 14	245	90%
ModNation Racers	192	90%
Monkey Island 2: Special Edition	195	94%
Mortal Kombat	205	81%
Mortal Kombat Vs DC Universe	173	68%
MotoGP 10/11	204	64%
MotoGP 13	233	74%
Motorhead	173	60%
MotorStorm	151	92%
MotorStorm: Apocalypse	203	76%
MotorStorm: Pacific Rift	172	93%
Mud: FIM Motocross Championship	217	50%
MX Vs ATV Alive	206	42%
MX Vs ATV Reflex	189	68%
MX Vs ATV Untamed	164	58%
nail'd	201	61%
Namco Museum Essentials	193	60%
Naruto: Ultimate Ninja Storm	174	59%
Naruto Shippuden: UNS Generations	217	53%
Naruto Shippuden: UNS 3	230	85%
Naughty Bear	195	64%
NBA 2K12	211	88%
NBA 2K13	224	88%
NBA Jam	200	68%
NBA Live 09	170	81%

GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
NBA Street: Homecourt	151	68%
Need For Speed Carbon	151	76%
Need For Speed: Hot Pursuit	199	91%
Need For Speed: Most Wanted	225	95%
<p><i>Need For Speed: Most Wanted</i> is easily the best arcade racer of this generation. We absolutely love it.</p>		
Need For Speed ProStreet	161	86%
Need For Speed Shift	184	81%
Need For Speed: The Run	213	63%
Need For Speed Undercover	173	75%
NeverDead	215	39%
Nier	192	54%
Ni No Kuni: Wrath Of The White Witch	227	85%
NHL 10	184	85%
NHL 11	198	89%
NHL 12	210	78%
NHL 13	223	74%
NIGHTS Into Dreams...	224	75%
Ninja Gaiden Sigma	154	88%
Ninja Gaiden Sigma 2	184	82%
Ninja Gaiden 3	217	63%
Ninja Gaiden 3: Razor's Edge	231	80%
Noby Noby Boy	177	85%
No More Heroes: Heroes' Paradise	206	89%
Nucleus	155	82%
Numbast	183	60%
Okami HD	225	90%
One Piece: Pirate Warriors	224	69%
Operation Flashpoint: Dragon Rising	185	78%
Operation Flashpoint: Red River	205	75%
The Orange Box	161	93%
Outland	207	72%
OutRun Online Arcade	180	80%
Overlord II	181	68%
Pac-Man Championship Edition DX	201	91%
Pain	183	69%
Payday: The Heist	213	88%
Payday 2	235	79%
Peggle	189	94%
Persona 4 Arena	231	91%
<p>Essential for both <i>Persona</i> fans and fighting game enthusiasts, <i>Persona 4 Arena</i> is an absolute joy to play.</p>		
PES 2010	185	72%
PES 2011	197	73%
PES 2012	210	74%
PixelJunk 4am	220	40%
PixelJunk Eden	169	67%
PixelJunk Shooter	187	93%
PixelJunk Shooter 2	204	90%
PixelJunk SideScroller	213	77%
Phineas & Ferb: Across The 2nd Dimension	211	66%
PixelJunk Racers	160	74%
Piyotama	162	62%
Planet Minigolf	196	58%
PlayStation All-Stars Battle Royale	225	80%
PlayStation Move Heroes	204	54%
Poker Night 2	232	55%
POTC: At World's End	154	48%
Port Royale 3: Pirates & Merchants	224	54%
Portal 2	205	95%
Prince Of Persia	174	83%
Prince Of Persia: Classic	173	67%
Prince Of Persia: The Forgotten Sands	193	68%
Prince Of Persia Trilogy	200	88%
Prison Break: The Conspiracy	191	40%
Prototype	181	76%
Prototype 2	219	75%
Puddle	216	76%
The Punisher: No Mercy	182	49%
Puppeteer	236	70%
Pure	171	80%
Puzzle Chronicles	194	70%
Puzzle Dimensions	208	81%
Puzzle Quest Galactrix	181	68%
Quantum Conundrum	221	90%
Quantum Of Solace	175	57%
Quantum Theory	197	29%
Race Driver: GRID	167	85%
Ratchet & Clank: Q-Force	227	52%
Rag Doll Kung-Fu: Fists Of Plastic	179	83%
Rage	211	60%
Rainbow Moon	221	68%
Rainbow Six Vegas	155	88%
Rainbow Six Vegas 2	164	78%
Rango	203	54%

GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
Ratchet & Clank: A Crack In Time	186	82%
Ratchet & Clank: All 4 One	211	68%
Ratchet & Clank: Tools Of Destruction	160	72%
Ratchet & Clank Trilogy HD	221	88%
Rayman Legends	235	83%
Rayman Origins	212	80%
Red Dead Redemption	193	92%
Red Faction: Armageddon	207	62%
Red Faction: Guerrilla	180	80%
Remember Me	232	61%
Renegade Ops	211	78%
Resident Evil Chronicles HD Collection	221	82%
Resident Evil Code Veronica X	211	72%
Resident Evil: Operation Raccoon City	217	33%
Resident Evil: Revelations HD	232	71%
Resident Evil 4 HD	210	93%
Resident Evil 5	177	86%
Resident Evil 6	223	88%
Resistance: Fall Of Man	151	83%
Resistance 2	173	90%
Resistance 3	210	88%
Resonance Of Fate	191	79%
Retro City Rampage	228	78%
Ridge Racer 7	151	75%
Ridge Racer Unbounded	217	67%
Riff: Everyday Shooter	162	86%
Rise Of The Argonauts	176	58%
Risen 2: Dark Waters	222	58%
Risen 3: Titan Lords	248	25%
Risk: Factions	202	80%
Rock Band Blitz	223	80%
Rock Band	169	94%
Rock Band 2	179	96%
Rock Band 3	199	84%
Rocksmith	223	78%
Rogue Warrior	188	09%
Rugby World Cup 2011	209	49%
Rune Factory Oceans	220	51%
RUSE	197	82%
The Saboteur	187	67%
Sacred 2: Fallen Angel	180	76%
Sacred 3	247	60%
Saints Row 2	172	79%
Saints Row: The Third	211	88%
SBK Generations	220	51%
Saint Seiya: Sanctuary Battle	216	52%
Sam & Max: The Devil's Playground Ep1	194	90%
Sam & Max: The Devil's Playground Ep2	194	92%
Savage Moon	175	87%
Saw	186	52%
Saw II: Flesh & Blood	198	36%
Scott Pilgrim Vs The World	197	77%
The Secret Of Monkey Island SE	195	92%
Sega Rally Online Arcade	208	74%
Sega Mega Drive Ultimate Collection	177	85%
Section 8: Prejudice	209	80%
SBK 2011	206	70%
SBK Generations	220	54%
SBK X: Superbike World Championship	193	67%
Sega Rally	158	92%
Sengoku Basara: Samurai Heroes	198	76%
Shadows Of The Damned	207	79%
Shank	197	86%
Shatter	183	91%
Shaun White Skateboarding	198	70%
Shaun White Snowboarding	173	72%
Shellshock 2: Blood Trails	177	32%
Shift 2: Unleashed	204	66%
The Shoot	199	76%
Shoot Many Robots	217	81%
Silent Hill: Downpour	217	81%
Silent Hill HD Collection	217	76%
Silent Hill: Homecoming	174	64%
The Simpsons Arcade Game	216	54%
The Simpsons Game	160	82%
The Sims 3	199	87%
The Sims 3: Pets	212	70%
SingStar	159	80%
Singularity	195	80%
Siren Blood Curse	170	62%
Skate	159	86%
Skate 2	175	82%
Skate 3	192	86%
Skullgirls	218	88%
Sleeping Dogs	222	80%
The Sly Collection	200	84%
Sly Cooper: Thieves In Time	230	60%

GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
Sniper Elite V2	218	52%
Sniper: Ghost Warrior	206	45%
Sniper: Ghost Warrior 2	230	55%
SOCOM: Special Forces	205	63%
Sonic Adventure	198	63%
Sonic Adventure 2	225	69%
Sonic CD	214	82%
Sonic The Hedgehog 4: Episode 1	199	82%
Sonic The Hedgehog 4: Episode 2	225	40%
Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing	190	78%
Sonic & All-Stars Racing Transformed	227	88%
Sonic Generations	212	70%
Sonic The Hedgehog	151	52%
Sonic Unleashed	175	48%
Sorcery	219	76%
SoulCalibur IV	169	94%
SoulCalibur V	214	80%
South Park: The Stick of Truth	242	81%
Spec Ops: The Line	220	59%
Spider-Man 3	155	33%
Spider-Man: Edge Of Time	212	38%
Spider-Man: Shattered Dimensions	197	69%
Spider-Man: Web Of Shadows	173	55%
Spin Jam	174	32%
Splatterhouse	200	58%
Splinter Cell Double Agent	153	79%
Split/Second: Velocity	192	90%
Sports Champions	196	83%
Sports Champions 2	225	65%
SSX	216	45%
Stacking	203	88%
Starhawk	219	81%
Star Ocean: The Last Hope International	190	63%
Star Trek	231	52%
Star Trek: D-A-C	189	57%
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed	171	65%
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed II	199	61%
Star Wars: Pinball	230	79%
Start The Party!	196	72%
Stormrise	178	51%
Stranglehold	159	65%
Street Fighter III: 3rd Strike Online Edition	209	92%
Street Fighter IV	176	95%
Street Fighter X Tekken	217	83%
Strength Of The Sword 3	234	81%
Strider	242	62%
Super Puzzle Fighter II HD Turbo Remix	168	78%
Super Rub-A-Dub	151	83%
Super Street Fighter IV: Arcade Edition	207	88%
Stuntman: Ignition	157	82%
Super Stardust HD	155	74%
Superstars V8: Next Challenge	190	55%
Superstars V8 Racing	181	63%
Super Street Fighter II Turbo HD Remix	176	72%
Super Street Fighter IV	191	90%
Supremacy MMA	211	40%
Switchball	191	75%
Swords And Soldiers	199	88%
Syndicate	216	78%
Tales Of Graces f	222	77%
Tales Of Monkey Island	196	91%
Tales Of Xillia	234	70%
Tekken 5: Dark Resurrection Online	161	87%
Tekken 6	184	94%
Tekken Tag Tournament 2	223	90%
Test Drive Ferrari Racing Legends	221	60%
Tetris	202	84%
Test Drive Unlimited 2	203	62%
The Amazing Spider-Man	221	61%
The Last Of Us	233	94%
When <i>The Last Of Us</i> is good (winter), it's better than anything else this gen – we do not say that lightly.		
The Last Of Us: Left Behind	242	81%
The Testament Of Sherlock Holmes	224	55%
The Walking Dead	231	92%
The <i>Walking Dead</i> should be required playing for anyone who considers themselves a fan of our favourite medium.		
The Walking Dead: Survival Instinct	231	20%
Thor: God Of Thunder	206	38%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 14	231	61%
Time Crisis 4	166	69%
Time Crisis: Razing Storm	199	58%
TimeShift	162	72%
TMNT: Turtles In Time-Re-shelled	186	57%
TNA Impact!	171	71%

GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
Tokyo Jungle	223	81%
Tom Clancy's EndWar	173	80%
Tom Clancy's HAWX	177	75%
Tom Clancy's HAWX 2	196	69%
Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell Blacklist	235	71%
Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell Trilogy HD	210	78%
Tomb Raider	229	90%
Tomb Raider Trilogy	204	86%
Tomb Raider: Underworld	173	83%
Tony Hawk's Project 8	151	85%
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater HD	223	73%
Tony Hawk's Proving Ground	160	72%
Tony Hawk: Ride	188	52%
Top Darts	202	71%
Top Gun	198	53%
Top Gun: Hard Lock	218	45%
Top Spin 3	168	71%
Top Spin 4	203	60%
Topotai: Spinning Through Worlds	183	61%
Toy Story 3	195	82%
Transformers: Dark Of The Moon	208	64%
Transformers: Fall Of Cybertron	223	73%
Transformers: War For Cybertron	194	80%
Trash Panic	181	79%
Trials Of Topaq	159	50%
Trine	184	85%
Trinity: Souls Of Zill O'll	202	56%
Trinity Universe	194	61%
Tron Evolution	200	17%
Tumble	198	70%
Turning Point: Fall Of Liberty	165	40%
Turok	163	46%
TV Superstars	199	53%
Twisted Metal	216	68%
Two Worlds II	203	64%
UFC Undisputed 2009	180	90%
UFC Undisputed 2010	193	88%
UFC Undisputed 3	215	82%
Ultimate Marvel Vs Capcom 3	212	78%
Ultra Street Fighter IV	246	85%
Uncharted: Drake's Fortune	161	87%
Uncharted 2: Among Thieves	185	96%
Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception	212	90%
Under Siege	207	71%
Unearthed: Trail Of Ibn Battuta: Ep1	233	05%
The Unfinished Swan	225	78%
Unreal Tournament III	162	88%
Untold Legends: Dark Kingdom	151	54%
Valkyria Chronicles	173	82%
Vancouver 2010	189	76%
Vanquish	197	93%
Viking: Battle For Asgard	165	74%
Virtua Fighter 5	151	83%
Virtua Fighter 5: Final Showdown	220	90%
Virtua Tennis 3	150	91%
Virtua Tennis 4	205	79%
Wakeboarding HD	195	65%
The Walking Dead: All That Remains	240	89%
The Walking Dead: 400 Days	234	83%
Wanted: Weapons Of Fate	179	63%
Warhammer 40,000: Space Marine	210	51%
Warhawk	157	84%
Warriors: Legends Of Troy	202	14%
Warriors Orochi 3	217	59%
Watchmen: The End Is Nigh	183	55%
Way Of The Samurai 3	190	16%
Wet	184	41%
Wheelman	178	72%
Where The Wild Things Are	188	56%
White Knight Chronicles	190	55%
White Knight Chronicles II	207	49%
Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?	214	79%
WipeOut HD	172	84%
Wizorb	222	78%
Wolfenstein	183	72%
Wonderbook: Book Of Spells	226	80%
Worms Collection	224	85%
Worms 2: Armageddon	198	87%
Worms Ultimate Mayhem	217	80%
WRC: FIA World Rally Championship	197	76%
WRC 2: FIA World Rally Championship	211	63%
WRC 3 FIA World Rally Championship	225	75%
WSC Real II	204	69%
WWE All Stars	204	82%
WWE Legends Of WrestleMania	178	80%
WWE SmackDown Vs Raw 2011	199	63%
WWE 12	212	50%

GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
WWE 13	225	55%
X-Blades	178	54%
XCOM: Enemy Unknown	224	94%
Thinking, planning, failing and dying is back in fashion: <i>XCOM</i> is a phenomenal reimagining of a classic title and an instant classic in its own right.		
X-Men Arcade	203	60%
X-Men Destiny	211	35%
X-Men Origins: Wolverine	179	71%
Yaiba: Ninja Gaiden Z	242	35%
Yakuza: Dead Souls	216	60%
Yakuza 3	191	80%
Yakuza 4	203	79%
Yar's Rev	206	57%
Zen Pinball 2	224	90%
Zombie Apocalypse: Never Die Alone	213	69%
Zone Of The Enders HD Collection	226	81%
Zuma	182	78%

PS VITA LISTING



GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
A-Men	217	70%
Army Corps Of Hell	217	64%
Assassin's Creed III: Liberation	225	76%
Atelier Meruru: The Apprentice Of Arland	221	35%
Everybody's Golf	215	86%
BlazBlue: Continuum Shift Extend	216	85%
Call Of Duty: Black Ops Declassified	227	18%
Danganronpa: Trigger Happy Havoc	242	85%
Dead Nation	201	86%
Destiny Of Spirits	244	76%
Dokuro	230	71%
Earth Defense Force 2017 Portable	230	82%
Escape Plan	216	81%
FIFA Football	216	80%
fiOw	151	90%
Flower	176	85%
Gravity Crash	187	85%
Gravity Rush	219	86%
Hotline Miami	233	85%
Hustle Kings	216	81%
Joe Danger	194	96%
Killzone: Mercenary	236	88%
LittleBigPlanet	223	93%
Little Deviants	215	69%
Lumines Electric Symphony	216	85%
MGS HD Collection	221	70%
ModNation Racers: Road Trip	215	59%
Mortal Kombat	219	83%
MotorStorm RC	217	81%
Muramasa Rebirth	234	80%
New Little King's Story	224	70%
Ninja Gaiden Sigma Plus	217	72%
Ninja Gaiden Sigma 2 Plus	230	60%
Oddworld: Stranger's Wrath HD	214	86%
Orgarhythm	230	55%
PlayStation All-Stars Battle Royale	225	80%
Persona 4 Golden	228	94%
PixelJunk Monsters	163	94%
Puddle	222	82%
Rayman Origins	216	84%
Reality Fighters	215	52%
Resistance: Burning Skies	219	54%
Ridge Racer	216	48%
Rocketbirds: Hardboiled Chicken	212	82%
Silent Hill: Book Of Memories	225	32%
Sorcery Saga: Curse of the Great Curry God	240	70%
Soul Sacrifice	232	85%
Sound Shapes	223	88%
Superfrog HD	234	41%
Super Monkey Ball: Banana Splitz	224	78%
Sumoni: Demon Arts	230	46%
Super Stardust Delta	216	84%
Tearaway	239	80%
Terraria	232	85%
Touch My Katamari	216	83%
Toukiden: The Age Of Demons	241	86%
Ultimate Marvel vs Capcom 3	216	80%
Uncharted: Fight For Fortune	227	83%
Uncharted: Golden Abyss	215	83%
Unit 13	216	67%
Velocity Ultra	233	80%
Virtua Tennis 4: World Tour Edition	215	81%
Virtue's Last Reward	227	84%
WipeOut 2048	215	87%

*denotes import review

PLAYING THE PLAYLIST

Watch out! Games!



WHAT (have they been playing?)

Destiny

WHY (was it chosen?)
I just can't seem to stop...

LUKE ALBIGÉS

I'VE ALREADY GOT

two characters who are Raid-ready and by the time you read this, my third will likely be well on her way. Even though I've seen everything *Destiny* has to offer at this point (well, bar the end of the Vault Of Glass), I still can't stop going back to my planet of choice the second an invite drops into my inbox. I'm all kinds of excited to see what Bungie has up its sleeve in terms of additional content, and I'm happy to shell out for the expansions if they add a significant amount of content. I really should play something else for a bit. But I won't.



WHAT (have they been playing?)

Final Fantasy VII

WHY (was it chosen?)
Sweet, sweet nostalgia...

PAUL WALKER-EMIG

THIS IS A game I've been meaning to revisit for years, in part to find out if *Final Fantasy VII* still holds up today, or if my rose-tinted specs would be crushed under the foot of time as it continues its irrevocable, entropic march into infinity. I've learnt two things. Firstly, irrespective of the realisation that time will eventually doom us all, *Final Fantasy VII* is still a great JRPG, if flawed in some aspects. Secondly, the Vita is a great system for revisiting PlayStation classics. *Final Fantasy VIII* could be next.



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Cover image

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13-issue subscription UK £51.90 / Europe £70 / ROW £80

Circulation

Head of Circulation **Darren Pearce**
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Printing and Distribution

Printed by Wyndeham Heron, The Bentall Complex,
Colchester Road, Heybridge, Maldon, Essex CM9 4NW

Distributed in the UK, Eire & the Rest of the World by
Marketforce, Blue Fin Building, 110 Southwark Street,
London SE1 0SU
0203 148 3300

Distributed in Australia by Network Services (a division of
Bauer Media Group), Level 21, Civic Tower, 66-68 Goulburn
Street, Sydney, New South Wales 2000, Australia
+61 2 8667 5288

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THE SAGA ENDS

BATMAN: ARKHAM KNIGHT

We emulate the world's greatest detective as we investigate the concluding entry in Rocksteady's epic Arkham trilogy...

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ISSN 1358-9474



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